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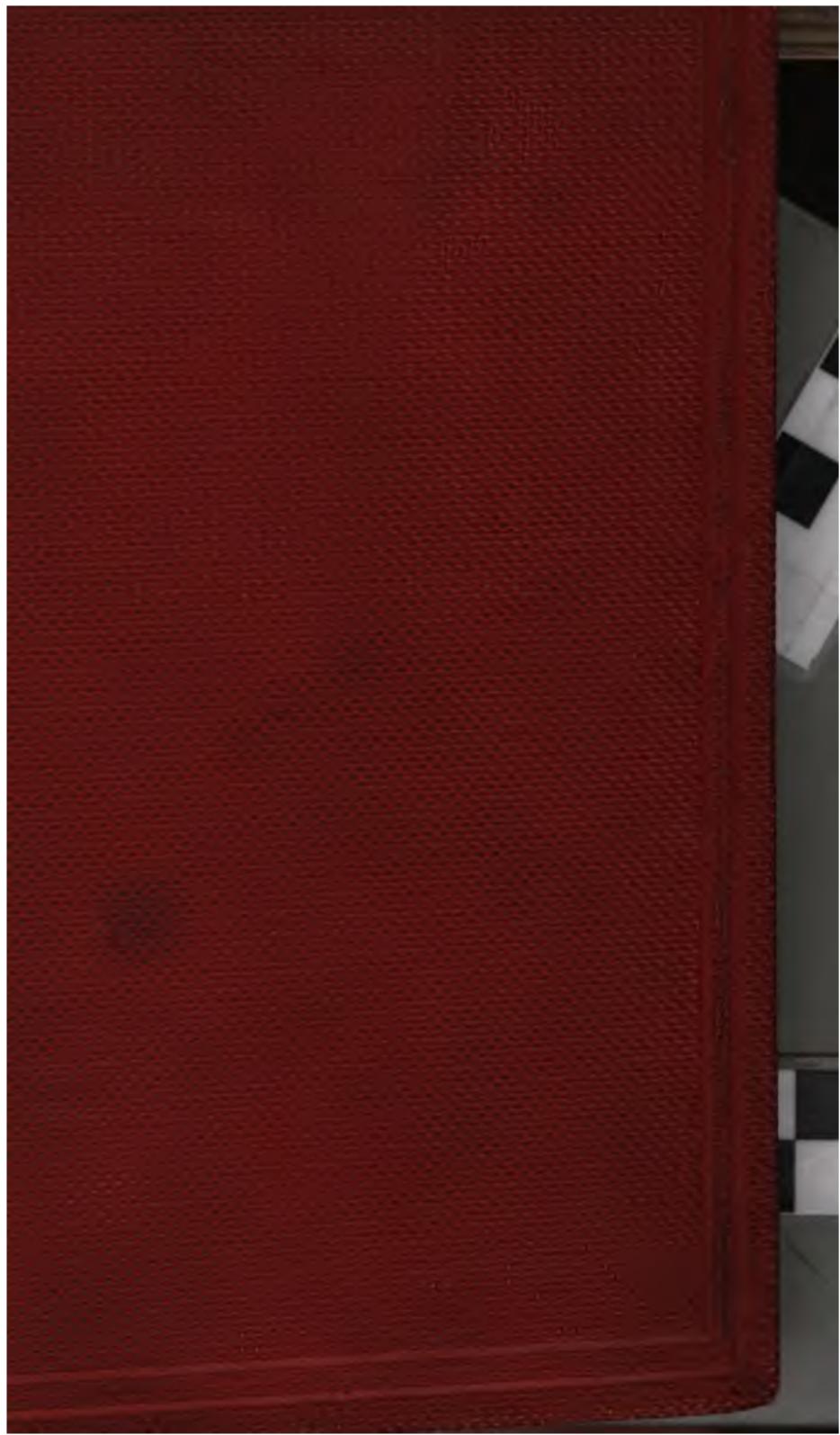
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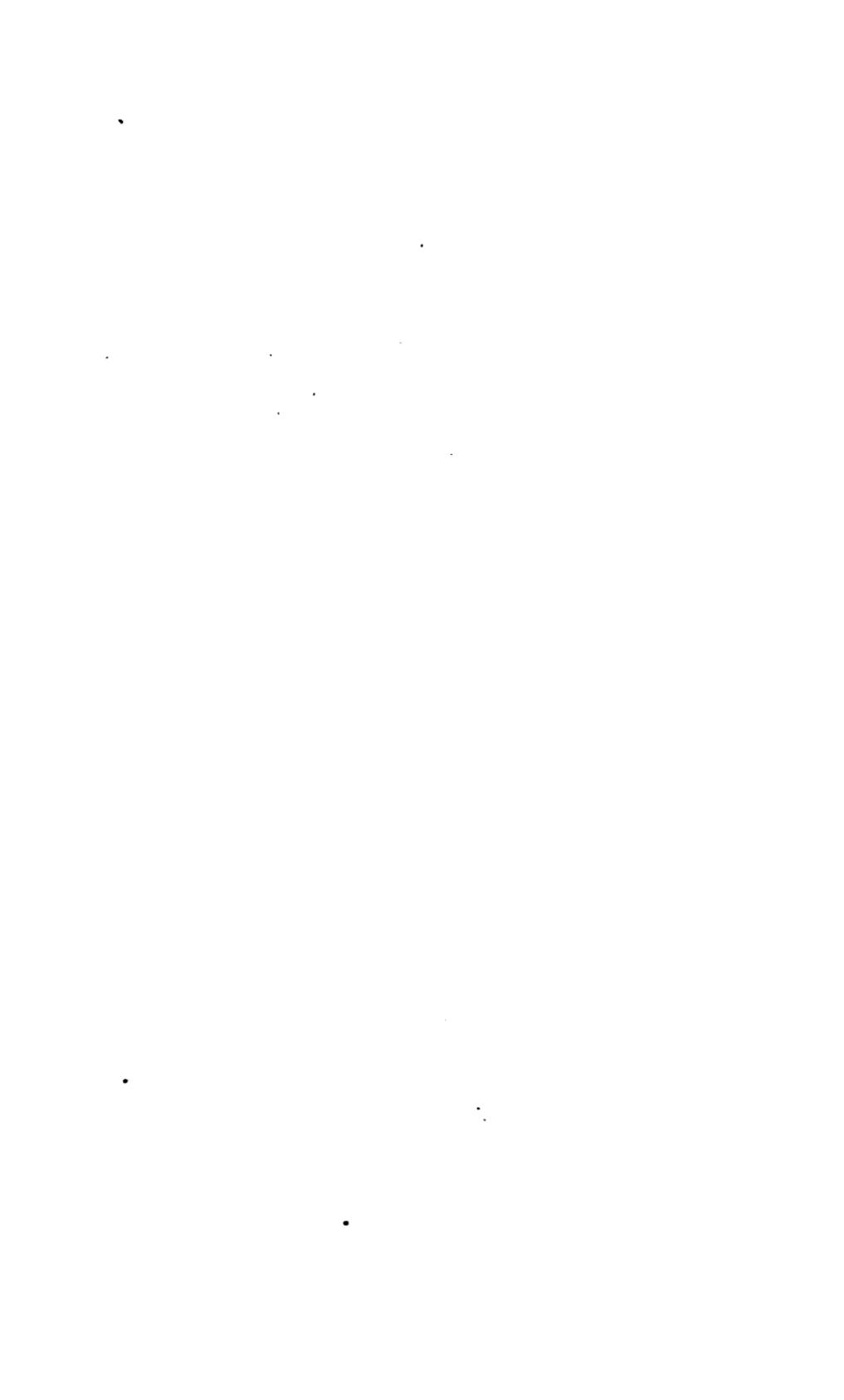
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LEN





L I G H T.

BY

HELEN MODÈT.
//

"Lead kindly Light amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
Through dreary doubt, through pain and sorrow, till
The night is gone."

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TO

MY BELOVED FATHER,

FOR WHOSE WISE COUNSELS I AM INDEBTED,

AND

WHOSE FAITHFUL LOVE HAS BLESSED ME,

AND BID ME GOOD SPEED,

I Dedicate this Book,

H. M.



L I G H T.

C H A P T E R I.

"Miss Miller is fine, Miss Markland's divine,
Miss Smith she has wit, and Miss Betty is braw,
There's beauty and fortune to get wi' Miss Morton,
But Armour's the jewel for me o' them a'."

ROBERT BURNS.

IT was the eleventh of June, in the year 185-, and the sun was shining brightly on the extensive grounds of Mr. Harcourt, making every dewdrop a gem that sparkled on the roses which perfumed the air with their delicious fragrance. The leaves of the silver poplar shone with unusual brilliancy, and not a breath of air stirred the foliage of the many trees by which the mansion was surrounded. All was tranquil, calm, serene. A part of the lawn sloped down toward the river; and there was scarce a ripple on the water. An old boatman stood upon the shore, his sunburnt visage contrasting strangely with the fair face of the young girl by his side, to whom he seemed exhibiting the beauties of a new boat, now resting idly on the water.

"Your father is right to be pleased, Miss Mona, for there are none like it hereabout."

Miss Mona looks up with a smile; her face is half shaded by her wide hat, but the pretty mouth and dimpled cheeks old Joe can see, as she bestows some pleasant encomiums on the object of his pride, and adds that it must be called "Minnehaha."

"That is an Indian name, Joe. It means 'laughing water.'"

"Does it, miss?" Joe inquires wonderingly, and watches his young lady as she gathers her white dress up daintily, and steps lightly over the wet sand.

"Whither bound?" said a voice behind her, and Mona, starting, saw a gentleman within a few feet of her, looking toward her with a half smile. She drew her little figure to its full height.

"I beg your pardon," said the intruder, touching his hat, and bowing slightly. "I thought I was only addressing a child. I find I am intruding on private grounds."

He turned quickly, and lightly vaulted over a fence which led into the road, while Mona walked away. For the first time that day a cloud passed over the sun; the water ceased to sparkle; in an instant the unclouded brightness of the day was gone. A boat now glided down the river, rowed by a single oarsman—a tall, dark man—and Mona looked back to give him a nod of recognition, and say, "Good morning, Mr. Hamilton." The person so addressed allowed his oar to rest a moment in its lock, whilst he uncovered his head. Thus the stranger, also looking back, saw distinctly his features,

and his own face, before stamped with wondrous beauty, turned to a sickly hue; his limbs seemed to fail him; his whole frame trembled like that of one oppressed with supernatural dread. But he recovered himself ere long, and, perceiving that the object which had so excited him was disappearing from his view, and that the young lady had also gone, he retraced his steps, and, calling the old servant toward him, asked :

“To whom does this place belong ?”

“To Mr. Harcourt,” answered Joe.

“And who was that gentleman in the boat just now ?”

“Mr. Hamilton, sir.” Joe was unobservant of the questioner’s look of horror, his white lips and husky voice, and continued : “He does not live here, sir ; he is a-visitin’ at a relation’s in Clifton, Mr. Fairfax.”

“Thank you ; I thought I knew his face ;” and now the obtuse old boatman is mystified by the stranger’s mutterings, as he walks slowly away.

“The dead do not arise, then,” thought the stranger, as he pursued his lonely walk. “This is no spirit from another world, but the living image of the dead man ! Great Heaven ! my terror leaves me, and my hatred grows.”

The look of fear had passed from his countenance, and in its stead rose an expression of bitter malignity and terrible vindictiveness. Before, he had been an abject, frightened wretch, yet still a man—a man for whom some pity might be given, some hope be felt ; now, he was a demon in his hatred and his malice ! He was yet wandering by the river side, though at some distance from the grounds of Mr. Har-

court, when the person whose appearance had excited his emotion repassed. This time he was accompanied, and his voice and his companion's might be heard as they neared the shore. His companion was a stout, well-built man of forty, with an open, frank face, fair hair, and light mustache; his eyes, though blue, were keen, and, despite his Panama hat and loose sack coat, he had the air and bearing of a soldier.

The loiterer on the land seated himself under the shade of a tree, and watched the men with interest.

"Put me off here," said the elder of the two. "I must see Glenn early. I can walk to his house in five minutes from this place."

"There is a man resting under that maple, Tracy," remarked the one called Hamilton, as he pushed his boat to the shore. "Can he be Glenn?"

"Rather a different specimen of the *genus homo*," replied Tracy, as he stepped upon the bank.

The lounger beneath the tree arose, and strolled toward them. "Fine morning, gentlemen," he remarked, with a smooth, unmodulated voice, "but rather warm for boating; at least if one is one's own oarsman." He was a little above the medium height, finely formed, and his face was strangely beautiful. Tracy and Hamilton regarded him with increasing interest. Although convinced that they had never seen him before, to both his features seemed familiar. He spoke with indifference; he scarcely looked at them; and when Mr. Hamilton made some reply, he did not seem to hear, but overturned some pebbles with his cane, then stooped to raise

them, and cast them in the water, lazily watching the eddies which they made, like some boy at play. The friends exchanged a few words, and had bidden each other "good morning," when the stranger once more advanced, and, with apparent surprise, and more animation than he had yet evinced, said :

"This is Captain Tracy, I believe?"

"You have the advantage of me, sir," replied the Captain, with a pleasing, genial smile.

"My name is Maxwell. I am quite a stranger here, but you were pointed out to me yesterday by a friend of mine, Mr. Glenn; and he said so much in your favor, that, as soon as I recognized you, I ventured to make your acquaintance. Rather a presumption, you think; but I came to Clifton to enjoy the fresh air of the country, and have found this morning so insufferably dull, that I am glad of any excuse for speaking to a human creature, or claiming fellowship with my kind."

Mr. Hamilton had pushed his boat from the shore, and was rowing out into the stream. He waved his hand to the two men as they stood conversing amicably, and, when opposite Mr. Harcourt's country seat, he pulled more vigorously upon the oars, and was speedily out of sight. Meanwhile, "Miss Mona" had ascended the hill, and reached her father's house. It was large, and surrounded by piazzas. On one of these, which overlooked a parterre of brilliant flowers, might be seen three maidens, guests of the house, preparing bouquets of various sizes and description, and vieing with each other in the taste of their arrangement. The pretty

tasks were quite completed, when the young hostess appeared, looking as lovely as the morning. Her golden curls floated about her soft face; her bright eyes shone with mirth and happiness. She was the most *petite* of the four, and stood before them like a smiling fairy.

"*Mesdemoiselles*," she cried, "you have no conception of your fascinations while thus employed. I am ten thousand times obliged for your kind offices in preparing such floral decorations. If you are one half as charming this evening as now, my *fête* will be world-renowned!"

"Blarney, thy name is Mona Harcourt!" said Mary Stanley, laughing. "But, indeed, I think we deserve all these pretty speeches, because of the arduousness of our task, and its faithful performance. Constance has excelled us all, however, and I am highly indignant thereat;" and she pointed to the tallest of the group, who was adjusting to her satisfaction a last mossbud in an open vase, wherein many roses had been placed, and who now raised her graceful head, and in the same lively strain replied:

"Constance deprecates your indignation, and begs leave to differ in opinion. Come, let us away with our floral burdens."

She seized two large baskets filled with garden beauties and the choicest exotics, and entered the drawing room, followed by her companions, bearing all sorts of receptacles for flowers. Then ensued an earnest discussion concerning the disposition of the flowers about the spacious apartment. When all was arranged, the merry girls threw themselves upon the sofas, to contemplate their work and talk of the

evening's anticipated enjoyment. They were a charming group—young, fair, and brilliant, yet very different. The face of Mona Harcourt sparkled with vivacity, but the features of her cousin, Constance Langdon, were calm and composed. It is true, that when the latter spoke, her eyes brightened, and her whole countenance was animated; but, when silent, there was almost a sadness on her face. Mona's hair fell in luxuriant but light curls about her fair face, but Constance's dark and heavy braids were like signs of deeper thought. Mona's pouting mouth was full of self-will; but her cousin's curved lips, though indicating, as is said, a sanguine temperament, yet often, when she was silent, were compressed, as if she strove to endure some inward pain with patience. Therefore the expression of her face, to an acute observer, might seem rather the result of circumstance than indication of character. Those who knew her best, said that she was never sad, sometimes grave; but gravity is not sadness. Often, when the more volatile Mona had become quiet and dull, it was Constance who roused her, and imparted to the capricious little beauty some portion of her own cheerfulness; for her temper was equable, and her earnestness in the performance of every duty did not prevent vivacity and innocent gayety. But her crowning charm was her ready sympathy, her quick perception of that which was fitting to be said and the time to say it, her unselfishness, her desire not so much to please as to give pleasure. Thus, whilst she entered into the joys of others, if any sorrow was chastening her young heart, no outward trace appeared upon the placid brow and smiling lips.

Mary Stanley and Margaret Courcy were not possessed of the unusual personal loveliness of the two cousins, yet they were fair types of comely women. Mary was gentle, courteous, and intelligent; her charms were not striking, but her character was winning; and even those who remarked that her "likes and dislikes were strong," were willing to allow that she was more ready to love than to hate. Miss Langdon and Miss Stanley were friends, residents of the same city, and both only daughters; they made their friendship stand in stead of sisters' love, and their constancy was the cause of jests and of admiration from their acquaintance. Their visit to Mona was therefore the more pleasing that they were not disunited.

But Margaret Courcy—the stately, elegant Miss Courcy—few could find words to describe her! Her head was finely formed, and evidenced mind; and her whole countenance wit and penetration, and what the world calls tact. But there was almost a cruel expression in her closed lips, and her forehead was too small, denoting restlessness; and her eyes, though brilliant, looked downward, never directly into the face of one who addressed her. She was too rich to escape the flatteries and caresses of dependants, and she was motherless; therefore, if her faults were many, we must judge her leniently.

From the description given of Constance, it will be readily believed that the religious element in her character might be prominently and strongly developed. And this was true. Her faith had been strengthened by a severe trial, which had doubtless caused the grave and

almost sad expression which sometimes shaded her beautiful and generally animated face. What that trial was, will soon appear. It had not deprived her of the capacity to enjoy the companionship of her youthful associates, or to unite in their innocent pleasures, or even to be merry at times ; but it had perhaps increased the strictness of her attention to religious duties ; at least, so thought her friends. An incident which occurred at this very time, whilst the ladies were reposing after their floral labors, will serve to illustrate the mind and conscience of Constance in this particular. The conversation had flagged for a few moments, when Miss Courcy said, laughing :

“ Miss Langdon is reserving the exercise of her conversational talent until this evening.”

At this moment the sound of a slow, solemn bell was heard, and Miss Courcy exclaimed :

“ What is that ? a church bell ? ”

“ Certainly,” replied Mona ; “ people go to service to-day. Why, you can have no idea of the excellence of the good people of Clifton ! ”

“ Oh ! it is a Catholic bell.”

“ It is our church,” said Mona.

Margaret opened her fine eyes in some surprise. “ Why, Mona, I should never suspect you of being so devout.”

“ Neither am I ; but Constance is, and Mary, too. They would go to church every day, if there was service.”

“ I cannot go to-day. I have an important letter to write before the mail closes,” said Mary ; “ I am very sorry.”

"Then I must have a solitary walk," said Constance Langdon, rising, "unless Miss Courcy will join me."

"Why, I never went to church on a weekday in my life, except Good Friday!"

"Well, then it will have the charm of novelty, and the walk will do you good. The church, too, is well worth seeing; it is built in the purest style, and a lady just returned from Europe will enjoy its beauty, and find it worthy of criticism."

"But is it right to go to prayers this morning, and to a party this evening?"

"Prayer is a good thing."

"Yes, certainly."

"Then it cannot be wrong to go."

"Plausible reasoning," laughed Margaret. "I'll go, Miss Langdon, as far as the porch."

"Will you go, Mona?" said her cousin.

"No, indeed, Connie; I cannot. Mamma wants me."

"Stay, then, *ma chere*. Home duties first."

The bonnets were soon donned, and the two young girls set out for their morning walk.

"You said, 'home duties first;' surely you think religious duties most important?"

"'Honor thy father and mother,' is a religious duty, and church-going every day is not so obligatory as to interfere with home regulations and comforts."

"Then why do you have service so frequently?"

"That some may always go. If Mary has letters to write to-day, she will be free to-morrow."

"What do you think of party-going to-night?" asked Miss Courcy.

Her companion smiled, as she replied: "Have we no social duties?"

"But strict people say such entertainments are pomps and vanities."

"And so they might be called, were there no restraining influences. If there was no kindly interchange of heart, no intelligence, no refined intercourse, no Christian charity to be found in such assemblies, those you denominate 'strict people' would be right. Christianity is not severe, and gloomy, and austere, but lovely, courteous, and of good report. Good, to be felt, must be seen. I am no advocate for cloisters."

"Yet you would make a good nun, I think. You look like one; you might act like one, if you were not so lively."

They were interrupted by a sudden embrace of Constance from a little girl some five or six years old, who had emerged, with her nurse, from the fine grounds near.

"I am so glad to see you, Miss Langdon! Where are you going? May I go too? Were you frightened to see me so suddenly?"

"My dear child, how can I answer all these questions at once? This is Bessie Hamilton, who is staying with her aunt, Mrs. Fairfax, this summer. Bessie, can you not speak to Miss Courcy?"

The child drew back, but soon, at Margaret's entreaties, very gravely submitted to the kiss bestowed, and then walked quietly by Constance's side.

"She does not look like her brother, Miss Langdon."

"Yes, I do," said the little lady; "he is pretty, and so am I."

Margaret laughed. "So you are pretty; but then you are not quite so tall as he."

"I am only a child; but, when I am grown up, I will be as tall as he."

"The Fates forbid," said Miss Courcy.

Constance turned to the nurse, and asked some kind questions. Then, having reached the church gate, the young ladies entered.

"Are you going to church, Miss Langdon? It is not Sunday!" cried the child. "I thought people only went on Sunday."

The friends exchanged glances. "Good people like Miss Constance," said the nurse, "go to church oftener than Sunday, miss."

"May I go?" said the child, coaxingly.

"I am afraid you won't be quiet, miss."

"Yes, I will," said Bessie, imperiously. "I will do as I please. If I want to go, I will."

"Bessie! Bessie!" cried Miss Langdon.

"Well, nurse ought not to say I would not be quiet."

"Nurse is quite right. If you are not quiet, you ought not to go. This is God's house, and we must all be still and reverent there."

The child looked up, not half understanding, but awed by the serious look of the beautiful girl who stood before her. The little face cleared. "I will be quiet, if you will take me;" and they entered the building together.

CHAPTER II.

"The world is full of meetings such as this."

WILLES.

CLIFTON, where our story opens, was a beautiful village, situated conveniently near one of our largest cities. There were many handsome country seats within it, and the society was considered "very select and agreeable." In truth, the place possessed many charms, in scenery and finely cultivated lands. It was noted for its beautiful drives, and the hospitality of its inhabitants; but only during the summer season, for, as soon as autumn donned her rich dress, the residents departed for their city homes, where, amid the gayeties and vanities and follies of the great Babel, the winter and spring months wore away.

Mona Harcourt was the only child of wealthy parents. Just nineteen, she had made her entrance into society some six months before. Fair, accomplished, possessed of a good share of wit, well endowed with worldly goods, full of life and vivacity, she had created quite a sensation on her *entrée* into the gay world. Wayward and indulged, she yielded to every caprice, yet her native sweetness of manner

made her many friends. Of these, three young ladies were now with her. Her cousin, Constance Langdon, and Mary Stanley, were residents of M——; whilst Margaret Courcy, a talented girl, and an heiress of immense wealth, was from New York.

The evening of the entertainment had arrived. The quartet of bright girls were all arrayed for the festivity. Before descending to the drawing room, Mona tapped lightly at her cousin's door. Constance admitted her, and Mona said :

“I have one request to make of you, my beloved coz, even that you will not sit here moping, but come down stairs and get some color into those pale cheeks, for Mr. Hamilton is coming, and you will want to look your prettiest.”

“Yes, I will.”

“Pretty well! You will wish to look your best for his sake! Candid confession, upon my word!”

“I mean, I will be down soon. Run away, fairy, please; I want to be alone. Do not flirt any more than you can possibly help to-night.”

“Not with Mr. Hamilton, so make yourself easy. But, *cousine*, how do I look?—Heavenly, I know, in this blue dress. Why do you not tell me how I look?”

“Your brilliancy has dazzled me so I cannot tell.”

“Then I will take myself away, that your vision may be restored before the elegant —— makes his appearance.”

She vanished from the doorway, and for a few moments her cousin stood, after the door was closed, looking through the open window upon the lawn. As she heard the first car-

riage driving up to the house, she turned, and knelt in prayer ; and when Constance Langdon had taken her place in the brilliantly lighted drawing rooms, her lovely face was more lovely, her dark eyes beamed with a purer light.

She was conversing gayly with her uncle, when the first guests appeared. The night was too warm for dancing ; but the house was a blaze of light, and the grounds were illuminated with colored lamps, and joyous beings flitted upon the lawn and promenaded the verandas. Later in the evening, while Miss Courcy was conversing very earnestly with Mr. Hamilton, already introduced to the reader, he abruptly exclaimed :

“ Here comes Miss Mona, to carry me away.”

“ Who is that man she is about to introduce to me ? ” inquired the lady, with ever so slight a shade of vexation in her tone.

“ His name is Mr. Wallis Egerton, I believe ; he is one of the residents of Clifton. I have never made his acquaintance. In fact, my visits here are usually so brief, I rarely have much to do with the society of the place. But if you wish some knowledge of his disposition, Miss Margaret,” he added, with a smile, “ I can make a shrewd guess that he is not only pedantic, but of a melancholy temperament.”

“ How do you tell that, Mr. Hamilton ? ”

“ That he is a pedant, by the manner in which his hair is brushed ; that he is melancholy, by the shape of his nose.”

Margaret laughed. “ Can you not devise some excuse for staying ? What a miserable fashion this is of separating people in the midst of an agreeable conversation ! ”

"I am inclined to deplore it, especially on the present occasion, as I am about to be borne away from so charming a companion."

She smiled. "To find a more fascinating one, I am sure."

"I can hardly hope for that."

"Miss Courcy, allow me to present Mr. Egerton," said Mona, as she came up.

Miss Courcy acknowledged Mr. Egerton's bow, and Mona carried away Mr. Hamilton.

"What is to be done with me, Miss Harcourt?" said that gentleman, as he offered his arm to the little lady, who touched his elbow with the tips of her fingers, as she remarked, with assumed pettishness, "You are inconveniently tall, sir." "What is to be done with me?" he repeated. "Am I to be handed over to the tender mercies of the fragile young creature who submits so gracefully to be fanned, or to the lady in pea green, who is so sallow and *passée*?"

"You do not deserve the honor in store for you. You are to be presented to the belle of the evening, the star of all this vast company."

"I need go no farther, then, for she is by my side." He bowed gallantly, and the lady drew her hand from his arm, and made him her profoundest courtesy.

"We are near the music room. Stop!" she cried. Well might they pause to listen, for the voice of the performer was exceeding beautiful. All within hearing of that voice remained silent until those melodious strains had ceased.

Then the songstress was surrounded by ladies and gentlemen asking for songs innumerable. But Mona made her way through the crowd, and presented Mr. Hamilton in these words: "An old friend, Constance."

The gentleman bowed low, as he took coldly the hand extended to him, and had barely time for some commonplace remark, before the master of the house welcomed him cordially, saying:

"Now for some duets. I have heard none which pleased me so much as yours with my niece last winter." His niece was so busily engaged untying the tassel from her fan, she did not seem to hear. Not so Edward Hamilton, who said:

"I am hoping, sir, for a solo from Miss Langdon."

"And you shall have one; but the duets first," cried the impatient Mr. Harcourt. "Come, my dear, you had much better play, than spoil your fan. Mr. Hamilton is waiting."

"I am quite ready, sir." She looked up as she spoke. "But it is some time since I have sung duets, and I am afraid I shall not equal your expectations."

Her uncle looked annoyed. "Such affectation is quite unusual in you, my love."

"My dear uncle, I will oblige you with pleasure, if Mr. Hamilton is disposed to join me."

"I am much flattered by being asked to do so. Miss Langdon must make her own selection of the song."

"What will you have, uncle?" said Miss Langdon.

"'The Gentle Breeze'—your old favorite from 'Lucia.' But, mind you, English words."

For an instant Constance hesitated ; then the faint flush died away from her cheeks as she commenced. But when the song was ended, the last farewell sung, her face glowed with excitement. Such harmony of the voices, such sweetness and richness combined, such infinite expression ! Not only was the execution perfect, but the soul of music was there. The listeners seemed entranced. One duet was given, then Mr. Hamilton called for his song.

“ What shall it be, Miss Stanley ? ” he asked of Mary, who was standing near.

“ An old-fashioned one—‘ Thy name was once a magic spell ’ Constance excels herself in that.”

Her friend sang as desired, and then deliberately rose from the piano. The eyes of Mary and of Mr. Harcourt were filled with tears. The others appeared strangely moved, except Hamilton, who as he gracefully thanked her for the treat she had given, added lightly, almost ironically :

“ I thought only very sentimental young ladies could sing those words with such exceeding pathos. Do not go. Miss Langdon, let us have another song.”

“ Excuse me, sir,” she answered gravely, and, courtesying slightly, she accepted the arm of some gentleman near, who led her to a seat.

Song after song was given by other fair ones—*morceaux* from various operas, waltzes, and polkas. Still Hamilton lingered near the instrument, complimenting or satirizing, but no longer singing. He at length led Mary Stanley from the room, and promenaded on the moonlighted piazzas.

“ Look at Miss Mona, holding her court,” said his com-

panion, pointing to the young hostess, surrounded by a half dozen admirers, all of whom were apparently well entertained. "How does our fairy queen contrive to charm all those men at once?"

"I thought young ladies were educated for that. Are you ever considered fit for society until you can entertain five people at a time?"

Mary laughed. "I believe you consider every woman a coquette."

"Certainly," he answered, smiling.

"If you go on as you are doing now, you will be a woman-hater, Mr. Hamilton."

"Would that do me any material harm?"

"You would not be so happy."

"Is it necessary to happiness to consider all women angels?"

"No, no; but do be serious. I believe you are too misanthropical to enjoy life, or do good."

"I do not know where I could do good, or even what you mean by doing good, Miss Stanley."

"You have so many talents for giving happiness," she answered simply; "you have talents of time, and money, and intellect, and education; you have kindly, generous impulses. Do not these do good?"

"To whom?"

"To all the world," she replied.

"A very extensive field of labor!"

"I mean, to those with whom you are thrown."

"Yourself, for instance. How can I do good to you?"

She laughed merrily. "You are doing good to me now; you are making me talk, and drawing me out of myself, while lecturing you. I was quite blue to-night, and now I am myself again."

"Then to make people talk, is to do them good. Thank you, that is definite. I might gamble away my fortune, ill treat my little sister, and I could make all the gossiping old maids in Clifton talk, and do them good!"

"Mr. Hamilton, you are incorrigible." She was really vexed.

"I beg your pardon. I am very dull of comprehension, and it causes me to be impertinent."

She smiled a little sorrowfully. "I wish I could do you good. I wish Constance Langdon would talk to you. I believe she could do any one service; she is so earnest, so winning, so full of heavenly wisdom and strong faith." She colored at the utterance of the last words, and added: "This is rather serious conversation amid such a scene."

"I like it," he replied. "One person only ever talked to me in this way. But it was useless, and I am useless. No one would miss me were I out of the world."

"Oh, Mr. Hamilton! it is wrong to talk so—very wrong. Do you forget Bessie?"

"She might mourn me for a while, but she is a child, and I have spoiled her already. She will mind no one."

"Why do you not commence correcting her? She is very warmhearted. Constance thinks she is all that is attractive."

"I cannot be harsh with her; I love her too fondly.

She will do anything for me ; but to others she manifests impertinence and self-will."

" Not toward Constance," persisted Miss Stanley.

" Miss Langdon, perhaps, imparts to her some of her own loveliness of disposition." There was some bitterness in his tone, and Mary thought he was jealous, and turned the conversation.

Mr. Hamilton, when released by Miss Stanley, again haunted the music room. He looked out of his element in so gay a scene, so haughty was his carriage, and so gloomy his face. Captain Tracy found him, and rallied him on his sombre air. His hauteur softened into affability at the sound of the genial soldier's voice, and his gloom disappeared, but not every shadow from his brow. He talked freely with his friend, but on subjects which interested them alone ; and at last Tracy exclaimed :

" Are those doubts never at rest ? My dear Hamilton, let the whole thing alone. What can it matter to you ? Years hence you can make these searches ; they are folly at your age ! I take these matters on faith ; I believe all that is reasonable ; I let the incomprehensibilities be only theme for occasional speculation or metaphysical discussion. Do not be forever harping upon truth and error or falsehood. Take life easily and kindly ; enjoy it while you may."

Hamilton interrupted him impatiently. " I tell you I have finished my investigations ; they are ended. If I have sowed doubt, I have reaped unbelief. No ; rather, I have discovered that all is false ! "

" All is false ! " echoed the Captain.

"What is false?" said a sweet voice. "Ah, Captain Tracy, what riddle have you solved?" Constance Langdon smiled brightly on the officer as she passed. The color mounted to her face when she perceived his companion.

"I was remarking to my friend here, that 'all is false save love's sweet light!' Do you perceive that he is inclined to dispute me? Can you convince him of his error, Miss Constance?"

Mr. Hamilton looked down upon the fair face which was turned involuntarily toward him. The smile faded from her lips, and her head drooped sorrowfully, but there was dignity in the sorrow. Captain Tracy was puzzled, for, in another instant, Miss Langdon's head was raised, and she said, lightly :

• "I think you gentlemen are both wrong, and shall not honor you with an argument."

The gentlemen deprecated such a sentence. "There must be truth somewhere, Miss Constance," said Tracy, "for you have found it."

"I have not lived long enough to be misanthropical, sir."

Miss Courcy, who, with some others, had now joined the group, said :

"All women are true." She addressed Captain Tracy, but she looked at Mr. Hamilton. The last-named gentleman answered the look.

"Then you do not believe, Miss Courcy, that

'Woman's love is writ in water,
Woman's faith is traced in sand'?"

"What heterodoxy! Certainly not."

Mr. Hamilton laughed. Whatever he might have said, was lost in a little excitement caused by the discovery of one of the ladies that some strange man, "with a horrid face, was peering through one of the windows." The Captain and Mr. Hamilton instituted a search, and returned, evidently disappointed in their hope of an adventure. Miss Courcy rallied them upon their romantic temperaments, whilst the alarmed Miss Glenn declared "that, of course, Miss Courcy might laugh if she pleased, but a man had looked through the window, and stared with his great eyes at Mr. Hamilton. Really," she continued, plaintively, "I shall not be able to sleep after such a fright, I am so nervous."

Margaret's lip curled. She despised the weak; and some gentlemen undertook to quiz Miss Glenn a little, but Captain Tracy was quite eager in his inquiries concerning the appearance of the person who had alarmed her, whilst Hamilton spoke as gently and soothingly to the foolish girl as if her fears had not been causeless; for the generous and brave of the stronger sex delight in consoling the timid and protecting the powerless.

They had been standing in a part of a hall which opened upon a veranda, and Tracy put his arm through his friend's, and led him out upon the lawn.

"Well?" said the latter, inquiringly, as he looked at the soldier.

"I have a tale to tell you, Hamilton, which is 'ower true.' The incidents occurred years ago, when I was a mere youth, and travelling abroad; but the story, simple as it will seem, has haunted my memory strangely all day."

"You are fanciful Tracy; but tell your story. Has it any bearing upon the apparition which poor little Miss Glenn has conjured up?"

"No, no. Why will you jest, when I am serious? Yet, since she mentioned the wild, threatening aspect of the man whom she thought she saw, it makes a deeper impression upon my mind.

"I was in London. The day had been unpleasant, and the sky looked lowering, but I spent it in sight-seeing; and when the evening set in dark and rainy, I sat down to write my letters. I wrote until very late; then I was disturbed by hearing a脚步 near my door. When I opened it, I discovered that a man was passing through the hall. He was a lodger in the house, and an American—a retired navy officer, I believe—and we had had some intercourse; but he was eccentric and crabbed, therefore I did not cultivate his society. I was surprised to see him prepared for going out on such a stormy night, and at such an hour, for he was an old man. I manifested my astonishment, and ventured to expostulate against his imprudence. 'What does it concern you?' he said, very abruptly, 'whether I go out or not? If I choose to be a fool, that is my misfortune, not yours!' I was always rather hotheaded, and, if he had been younger, I should have picked a quarrel upon the spot. As it was, I merely laughed, and replied, good-naturedly, 'that he might visit his Satanic Majesty, if he liked; I should not interfere.' He thanked me for the permission, and I returned to my room. I was hardly reseated, before I heard a knock at my door, and my visitor was the old ex-officer. 'I want you,'

he said, with a grim smile. 'Come.' I was ready for an adventure, and sprang to my feet. He ordered me to put on my hat and coat, telling me we were going out into the storm. 'On an errand of mercy,' he added. 'The poor wretch is an American—young, like yourself. I do not want your society; I want your knowledge.' I marvelled what sort of knowledge; but I knew the old man to be honest, and followed him. He enlightened me as we went down stairs. His desire was to learn, if possible, whom he was befriending. We traversed several streets and alleys, until we reached a mean-looking house, and discovered the object of charity lying on a miserable, dirty bed, surrounded by every sign of poverty and destitution.

"Hamilton, that youth—for he was younger than I—was the most hardened sinner I ever beheld. He was suffering intensely, apparently dying, and out of his mind; but I never heard such cursing, such oaths, such calls for vengeance on one who had injured him. His language was that of some devil suddenly become mortal. He talked of crimes which he must have committed, as if he exulted in them. Sometimes he mentioned names, but rarely, and then so indistinctly that we could not make them out. His face was faultless in form and feature, despite the ravages sickness, want, misery, and evil had made. His forehead and eyes were magnificent, even though his brow was always knitted; and his eyes were wild and fierce. The woman of the house said that he was American, and related some tale of his coming to her for lodging a week before, and that this fever must have been upon him then. I paid little attention,

for I was absorbed in speculations as to the private history of this young man ; but my crabbed acquaintance listened to her story, and gave her money for the relief and comfort of the sufferer. When we passed into the street, I expressed my conviction that he was befriending an unworthy object ; that the sick youth, if he were a countryman of ours, had been obliged to fly for some crime from the New World to the Old. But my companion would not hear me. He upbraided me for my inhumanity in no measured terms ; and when I rather eagerly plead not guilty to such a charge, and endeavored to explain, he silenced me with these words : ' I had a son once, and he was a sinner ; who am I, that, by harsh judgment, should send this young man to perdition ! '

" I left London the next morning. When I returned, after the absence of a fortnight, I found that my eccentric friend was gone, but had left a message for me, that the person whom we had visited was dead. I was curious enough to search for the place where the sick man had lodged, but my search was ineffectual."

" Well ? " said Hamilton, when the Captain had concluded.

" Well, well, well, what ? " rejoined Tracy, irritably. " With your ' wells ' and your ' whats,' you would drive a man mad ! What do you think of my story ? "

" A very fair one. But I cannot understand why it should haunt your memory to-day."

" I say, this escaped criminal, or hiding criminal—this sick man—was the man we met this morning on the river shore."

To the intense mortification of Captain Tracy, his friend burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter.

"Come forth from the dead!" he cried, as soon as he could speak. "We will search him out to-morrow, Tracy, and question him concerning the other world!"

Tracy could not endure ridicule; he was working himself into a passion. Mr. Hamilton perceived it, and his manner changed, although his face yet evidenced his amusement. He put his arm through the soldier's, and said, good-naturedly: "Pshaw! you cannot be angry with me. I beg your pardon; but you must acknowledge, my good fellow, that you are rather romantic."

The elder man was silent, for he truly loved the other, but his pleasant countenance was clouded by a remnant of his displeasure; and when Hamilton endeavored to induce him to speak again of his London acquaintance, he was unsuccessful. Captain Tracy's vexation sealed his lips. Having found conciliation unavailing, he allowed the subject to drop, and talked of other things, and by degrees his friend recovered his serenity of temper, and they conversed amicably.

"How long do you mean to remain in Clifton?" inquired Tracy at length.

"A few weeks longer, perhaps; then I shall take my little Bessie home again, if I can give my lonely habitation that pleasant title."

"Poor fellow!" returned the Captain, kindly. "I have no doubt it is lonely; but you should have gotten used to the change by this time. It is almost six years since your father's death."

Mr. Hamilton looked grave, and made no answer, whilst the other continued :

“ It has often been strange to me, that he who was so good a horseman, should have met with such an accident.”

He was startled by the sudden fire which burst from the eyes of Hamilton. “ Tracy,” he cried, grasping his arm so tightly as to cause pain, “ you have heard that he was thrown from his horse. It is true, but there was foul play ! When he was found, he bore no marks of violence but those occasioned by his fall ; but his wallet, containing money and papers of value, was gone, though his watch was left untouched. His horse must have been frightened by an assault, and, my father losing all control of him, the frightful end ensued. It is on my soul that I have not sought his murderer ; but when his senses returned, and I questioned him, he answered nothing, but made me vow to make no inquiry. How could I refuse at such a moment ?—and I am bound by my promise to the dead ! ”

“ Burton—Francis Burton ! did he speak of him ? ” asked Tracy, eagerly.

“ No,” rejoined Hamilton, in an altered voice ; “ he died years before. We knew it for a fact. He died, I say, years before. Tracy, never again allude to him ! ”

“ My poor friend, you are too sensitive ; but your wish shall be respected. And your father, was he unconscious at the end, or did he speak again ? ”

“ Once more he spoke. Strange, that a doubt should haunt him then ! But he cried out, ‘ Edward, if there be a God, pray Him to have mercy.’ ”

He paused, and the officer said: "And you?"

For an instant Hamilton hesitated—then he continued:

"How could I pray, who knew no prayer, and doubting the existence of a Deity? But Miss Mortimer, who was present, fell upon her knees, and, before she could articulate the two words, 'Our Father,' he had solved the great problem—death!"

Captain Tracy looked in his companion's face. Neither spoke, and for some minutes they paced in silence the terrace, until through the open windows floated the sweet music of a song. The voice of the singer they knew; it was that of Constance Langdon.

"Hamilton, if she were right, and we were wrong?"

Hamilton turned away his face, as he replied:

"It is too late, too late, Tracy. I could not, if I would."

CHAPTER III.

"Kindness by secret sympathy is tied ;
For noble souls by nature are allied."

DRYDEN.

A FEW mornings after the party, the young ladies, who had been receiving some morning visits, were seated in a pretty boudoir where luncheon had been served.

"Who goes riding this evening?" inquired Mona.

All declared their determination to be of the party, and were jesting one another relative to their respective gallants, when a servant entered with a note for Miss Harcourt. She pouted as she read it, and muttered, "How provoking!" but, perceiving the servant yet waiting, said: "Does the messenger want an answer, Jim? Tell him to wait. When it is ready, I will ring." The man disappeared. "Girls, do help me in my dilemma. I have promised Lionel Fairfax I would go riding with him, and here is a note from that punctilious Egerton—horrid old pedant!—reminding me of an engagement to ride with him to-day, and desiring to know if six o'clock will suit my ladyship."

"Did you promise both men, Mona?"

"Yes, indeed, that is the difficulty. Now Mr. Fairfax is

forever quarrelling, and I wanted a good fight to-day, for I am in a choleric mood; but to ride with that stupid man this beautiful evening, I will not."

"You will be obliged to send an apology to both gentlemen, and not be able to go at all. How sorry I am!"

"I will do no such thing, Constance!"

Her three friends could scarcely speak for laughing.

"How did you happen to accept Mr. Egerton's proposal?"

"I was in a good humor, and he looked so doleful, I thought I would cheer him a bit; but, as luck would have it, I forgot the promise entirely afterward. Do not try to look reproving, Constance; it is useless."

It was quite impossible to resist the mirth of her companions, and Mona's merriment soon exceeded theirs. She was, however, bent upon her ride, so despatched a note to Mr. Fairfax containing a very pretty apology, and, when dinner was over, was speedily arrayed in her riding habit, and Margaret found her in the library.

"What are you doing here?" she inquired.

"Just preparing 'to read up,' as the collegians say, 'for my interview with Mr. Egerton. I am studying the pronunciation of names. Do you say Don Ke-ho-te, San Won, Be-a-tre-sha——?'"

"Oh, you naughty girl! Are you not ashamed to ridicule that poor man?"

"I am paying him the greatest respect," retorted Mona; "I am educating myself for his society. Come, Margaret, you are learned; tell me the names of the seven wise men

of Greece, and whether Thales came before Pittacus, and—— But no ; perhaps we may discourse of modern literature to-day ; so select, please, the most misty and befogging book upon the shelves, and help me learn the headings of the chapters before half past five o'clock."

" You are the most heartless maid in the United States," cried Margaret, laughing. " But there come the horses to the door, and here are our knights tramping up the lawn. Put on your gauntlets, my lady."

They were soon seated in their saddles, and away. Constance and her escort led the van. Mary Stanley and Mr. Hamilton and the others followed at a more leisurely pace. Constance soon turned with her companion into a less frequented road, only beckoning to those behind to follow, which they did so slowly that Miss Langdon and Dr. Caxton were soon out of sight. Then, perceiving their distance from the rest of the party, they made their horses walk, remarking, as they rode, the beauty of the country.

Dr. Caxton was an amiable gentleman, a bachelor, and a universal favorite ; not a brilliant man in general society, yet kind, affable, and sensible, and, where known intimately, sure to win respect and esteem. He was a resident of Clifton, and a frequent visitor at the house of Mr. Harcourt, where he was ever cordially welcomed.

" This place is said to be haunted, Miss Constance," observed the Doctor, pointing to a pleasant house surrounded by neglected grounds. " Would you like to ride through that broken-down gateway, and reconnoitre ? "

The lady gladly assented.

"I should like to live in such a place as this—a spot so romantic, I mean," cried Constance, as they found themselves in a lawn filled with pine trees. The former carriage drive was grassgrown. Everything which met the eye looked wild and neglected; and as the Doctor pointed to the broken windows of the house, he smilingly remarked that she would find such a habitation rather comfortless. The house, the lawn, the lady's garden, with its odd-shaped parterres now overgrown with weeds, spoke of desolation and forlornness. But, as if in mockery of the gloom of the pines, and the otherwise dreary aspect of the place, a profusion of lovely Greville roses yet trailed about the broken trelliswork of the porch, and the Doctor dismounted to procure them.

"I am inclined to believe you very romantic, Miss Langdon," said Dr. Caxton, as he presented the bouquet to the fair equestrian. The gentleman was not an artist, but he thought Miss Langdon would make a very pretty picture as she sat upon her horse, with her flowers in her hand, their bright coloring contrasting with the dark green folds of her riding habit, her simple, unplumed hat pushed back a little from her forehead, and the heavy braids of her hair forming a rich framework for the pure oval of her face.

"How, sir?" She was arranging her roses. "Because I admire such places as this?"

He smiled an assent.

"Do you object to romance, Doctor?"

"It makes people very unpractical. I am afraid I do not appreciate sentiment, being so much a matter-of-fact man."

"Your greatest fault, sir, and one I will not pardon! Sentiment is right. It is the poetry of life. It makes home beautiful and happy. It is the sweetener of social duties. It throws a charm over everything—a nameless charm over the homeliest tasks, making even cakes, jellies, and puddings to possess some of the grace of poetry!"

"Ah, Miss Constance, you are a great enthusiast!"

"Oh, Doctor! how can you, a religious man, fail to appreciate that enthusiasm which, if rightly directed, is so noble and elevating an emotion? Imagination is a gift of God, and to be used for His glory. For that very reason our perceptions of beauty are trained in holy services. Music, flowers, decorations used in His worship, not left merely to appeal to the senses, but made symbols and types of that which is good and pure. No! our 'less discerning fancy' is not allowed to grow neglected and uncared for, like these poor roses about this porch, but, as Bishop Taylor writes, is 'bribed with its proper objects, and made instrumental to a more celestial and spiritual love.'"

Caxton looked with admiration upon Constance, her eyes sparkling, and her cheeks glowing with the earnestness with which she spoke.

"I am quite a convert to your opinions," he said. "Yet we poor, matter-of-fact people must be content to admire, not partake, of this 'poetry of life.'"

"No, no; you can cultivate it. Be in earnest, heartily in earnest, in all you do. Throw life into all. Be demonstrative. Oh! those cold, passionless persons, indifferent and uninterested in manner, self-possessed and self-contained,

afraid of showing heart lest it should not be returned, fearful of transgressing the rules of propriety, would drive me wild with their 'calmness and repose.' " She was half in jest and half in earnest.

" Ah, Miss Constance, you are too hard on the phlegmatic. We are not all heartless, we are not all selfish, and you of warmer temperament are more easily aroused."

She answered: " But we do not call the excess of reticence good breeding. We all talk of cultivation of mind; but how is this to be shown, if one must never speak but in set phrases? " She laughed in spite of herself, and added: " Do not look so grave, Doctor, at my tirade. I wish, notwithstanding your professed phlegmatic temperament, every one of my friends were as warm and truehearted. Now that is the last compliment I shall pay you for ever so long; so make the most of it, sir! "

" There come Miss Stanley and her knight," observed the Doctor. " What do you think of him? Is he not possessed of every poetic and romantic virtue? " He looked at her steadily as he spoke, and was puzzled by the peculiar smile which accompanied her words of response, " A comprehensive question."

She dropped her bridle on her horse's neck, and rearranged her flowers. The rose leaves, so disturbed, fluttered over the Doctor and the ground beneath his feet, and some were borne by the wind toward Mary and Hamilton.

" Ah, woman, true woman," said the Doctor, pleasantly,

" 'Scatters around her, wherever she stays,
Roses of bliss o'er our thorn-covered ways.' "

"I have done you good," retorted Constance, blithely; "you are quoting poetry already. Who is sentimental now?"

"We thought you were quite lost," said Miss Stanley, as she rode up to Constance; "but here we find you, enjoying yourselves by this shady porch. How long have you been here?"

"Long enough for me to receive a lecture," replied Caxton; "and now I beg you will not entrap her into another discussion, for I am completely overwhelmed by her arguments and enthusiasm. I had no idea she could be so severe."

"I am curious to know the subject of the lecture," said Mary.

"It was not on the treatment of *patients*, Miss Stanley."

"It is not every one who has enough of the virtue to need a treatise on the subject," remarked that young lady.

"See my beautiful roses, Mary," said her friend. "Are they not lovely?"

"Those in your hand, or those on your cheeks?"

Constance smiled, and the color of some of her roses was unmistakably deepened. "Those the Doctor gave me; mine own do not fade so easily."

"Allow me to procure some for you, Miss Mary," said Hamilton. He soon brought her a bouquet of such beauty, that the Doctor was obliged to procure Constance some more half-blown buds to make her collection at all comparable.

The sun was going down, and the pine trees, slowly moving in the rising breeze, began to look sufficiently gloomy.

"Do you know that this place is haunted?" said Constance, turning to the brown-haired lassie by her side; "or so that gentleman reports." She pointed with her whip to the Doctor, who was remounting his steed.

"What is the legend of the place?" inquired Mary.

"I cannot tell," replied Caxton; "but I understand that a woman in white appears every night at twelve o'clock on the south side of the house, and utters the most dolorous cries. Why she appears at twelve, and why she shrieks, I cannot say; but I suppose her apparition on the south side is easily explained, as that is the more *romantic* region."

"I move that Mr. Hamilton improvises a legend for our benefit," said Mary Stanley. "Do you second the motion, Constance?"

"Come, sir," said the Doctor, "the vote is carried by an overwhelming majority, and you are appointed speaker."

"I must decline the honor, sir, on the plea of incapacity for the task assigned," answered Hamilton.

"Not a bit of it," said Mary; "you are perfectly capable. Is he not, Constance? See, she acquiesces; then it must be so, for Miss Langdon knows you better than any of us, and is always right."

Hamilton bowed. "I remember of old, Miss Mary, that whatever opinion Miss Langdon expressed, you would always swear to its truth. I will ride round to the other side to observe the ground, and perhaps will be inspired to perform the task."

He had been gone but a moment, when a woman's shriek was heard, so wild and piercing, that the horses started

in affright, and the ladies' cheeks grew white with fear. The Doctor disappeared immediately, and Constance would like to have followed, to relieve her suspense; but Mary was overpowered with dread, and she was endeavoring to reassure her, when Hamilton appeared; bearing in his arms the form of a woman, whose shabby dress and pallid face proclaimed at once her poverty and weakness. The Doctor secured the horses, and then leaned over the prostrate form of the fainting creature, whom Hamilton had laid tenderly upon the old porch. The latter then assisted Constance to dismount, saying:

“ You must try to calm and soothe the poor woman, who was sadly alarmed by my sudden appearance.”

It seemed, from that which she incoherently told Miss Langdon, that she had been gathering brush on the place, when her foot slipped upon a stone, and she fell, her ankle much sprained, and so painful that she could not walk, and was obliged to remain in the dreary, lonesome place of which she had heard such ghostly tales. Her superstitious fears increasing with the rapidly growing darkness, her terror can scarcely be described when the forms of man and horse were seen. It was then she gave the shriek which Mary could scarce help fancying proceeded from the reputed ghost of the Pines.

The sweet face and kindly words of Constance soon calmed the woman, and she was able to give the foregoing account of herself, and to say that her name was Hannah Wilson, and that she lived a short distance from the Pines, and had two children, and was miserably poor.

The Doctor was able to administer some relief to the swollen ankle, while the others held a consultation as to the best means of conveying Hannah to her home. Hamilton volunteered to carry her, his strong, powerful frame fully justifying his ability. But the poor creature was still so nervous at the sight of "the tall gentleman," that all Constance's tact was required to induce her to accede to the proposal. She did so at length, and the rest rode slowly by his side, the Doctor leading the riderless horse. When the object of their care was deposited on her wretched bed, and her foot bathed and bandaged, and the Doctor was administering some quieting drops, Constance thought of the children, and found them so unruly, that she almost despaired of winning them to gentleness. Caxton expressed fears that the mother would suffer much from a night of pain, and desired to know where some one could be found who would stay with her for the night. He thought it possible a young woman in the next cottage could be obtained; and Hamilton, going in search of her, returned speedily with the girl, who readily undertook to nurse Hannah. The riding party then returned to Waverley, and found Mona, Margaret, and their attendants had already arrived, and were anxiously expecting the runaways. Apologies and explanations were made, and the gentlemen stayed to supper, every one in particularly good spirits, excepting Mona, who seemed slightly *distract*.

"Mr. Hamilton," she inquired, late in the evening, "where is Mr. Fairfax to-night? I thought he was to honor Waverley with his presence?"

"He told me he had an engagement with the Misses

Glenn. I thought he was to ride with you to-day, but he declared I was quite mistaken, for he never dreamed of such a delight."

Miss Harcourt laughed, but Constance fancied there was discord in the tone.

CHAPTER IV.

“ O friendship ! of all things the
Most rare, and therefore most rare, because most
Excellent.”

LILLY'S *ENDYMION*.

SEVERAL days were elapsed, and Hannah Wilson was improving. She had been quite ill with a nervous fever, but the “golden arguments” used by Mr. Hamilton had secured to her the nursing care of the young woman, Eliza England. Miss Langdon was a constant visitor, and had won the children into more tolerable behaviour. They had each received a clean dress and apron from Mrs. Harcourt, and the mother many little tokens of kindness in the way of clothing and delicacies suited to the sick and weak. She seemed grateful, and was always glad to see the faces of the young ladies, Mary and Constance. Mona declared her great repugnance to witness suffering, although her purse was ever open to assist those in need.

“ How little do you know, dear Mona,” said Constance, “ the happiness bestowed, the good done, by one word or look of sympathy !—a happiness greater, a good more lasting, than that given by the removal of only outward and present

want. Believe me, such good returns 'to the heart which gives it with a double blessing' you will not understand, because you will not experiment; and you have never known what it is to visit those in trouble and great sorrow, and yet have no money to relieve their pressing needs. A kind, gentle word, a word fitly spoken, will sometimes bring back to the hard, callous heart, softer, better thoughts of men; will rouse the belief of good in others, and of hope for one's self."

"And you, Constance, can utter just those words which are so 'sweet to the soul,' but I cannot. Do not shake your head; I speak the truth sometimes!"

"But not now," replied her cousin, laughing. "I know whose bright face cheered my sickroom once."

Mona put out her little hand. "Hush! I know who was patient and uncomplaining when sick, and not croaking and groaning forever."

Hamilton and Egerton were standing near, and the first said:

"You ought to see Miss Langdon's *protégé*, Miss Mona. She is quite a character, and so extremely sententious. She talks of your mamma's kindness, and says 'It's joy.' As for her young patroness, she never calls her anything but 'that lovely girl; her talk, it's preaching. She is such an excellent character; her smile, it's heaven!' I hope," he added, "that her frown would not be as terrible as her smile is consoling; but poor Hannah never speaks of the frown, from which we may infer that it is 'unknown.' "

This account seemed to amuse Mr. Egerton greatly; and

whenever Constance had launched forth in anything like to a little speech, as is quite common with modern young women of good understanding and enthusiastic temperament, he would cry, "Her talk, it's preaching!" until she grew quite disgusted.

Lionel Fairfax absented himself from Waverley for a fortnight, when, one evening, being Sunday, both he and his cousin made their appearance. There was no service at night; and as Sunday visiting was not discouraged by the Harcourts, these young men chose so to please themselves. Fairfax paid his compliments to Miss Mona with much easy grace, and neither alluded to the ride. His indifference and absence of all apparent pique vexed the young coquette not a little; so all her winsome arts were used to lure him into her net again.

"I have been longing for an old-fashioned quarrel for ever so long," she said. "Everybody has been too sensible to indulge me in talking nonsense; so I have been pining for mine enemy."

Fairfax smiled, and answered ironically:

"I have been to church to-day; it will never do to commence warfare now."

"How very good you are growing, sir! How long does this attack of amiability generally last? I never had the misfortune to witness it in you before."

"Is it possible I have known Miss Harcourt so long, and not found the native acidity of my disposition sweetened by intercourse with her gentle self?"

"From whom do you take lessons in gallantry, Mr. Fairfax?"

"From your friend, Mr. Egerton."

Mona bit her lip. "You are very ill-natured to-night."

"I beg your pardon; you but now called me amiable. Your memory is short, O lovely maiden!"

"I do not understand you at all. You are quite incomprehensible." She stopped, and tried a new method. "I ought to apologize to you for my apparent rudeness and neglect, some days ago. I promised Mr. Egerton quite hastily, and forgot it until reminded by him the day of the ride. I thought with much pleasure of my anticipated chat with you, and talked to my friends of the same. But I was sure you would forgive me, when I wrote such a sweet little note of apology to your highness. I'll never be so naughty again!" She raised her pretty eyebrows pleadingly.

Fairfax could not resist a smile of pleasure, although he said, satirically:

"I should be afraid to trust you again. The anguish of that day no words can express."

Mona tried hard to keep her vexation concealed. She turned aside in her pretty, childish manner, and said:

"You are very disagreeable, sir. I did believe that, notwithstanding our many mock quarrels, you were too true a friend to be really angry with ~~me~~." She looked up; her victory was complete, and poor Lionel in her toils again. She gave him her hand, but would not seem to hear his earnest words, for she had not quite determined to say "No," and listening would have made that or an affirmative answer obligatory; so she cried out, abruptly: "Margaret, what are you talking about?"

"I am glad your confab with Mr. Fairfax is terminated, for I want your assistance in getting Mr. Hamilton away from your papa. They are talking politics, and Constance has been giving me a discourse on friendship, which I wish him to hear, as I am aware that he has expressed very heterodox views on that subject."

Mona walked across the room to her father. "Papa, please leave politics alone for the present, and do not monopolize that ungallant man."

"What do you want of me, Miss Mona?" inquired Mr. Hamilton, as he followed that young lady toward the sofa on which Margaret and Constance were seated.

"I want you to tell us your views on friendship."

The gentleman looked as surprised as so well-bred a man could look at this abrupt question, but replied, with a smile:

"I am quite friendless, so have no views on the matter."

"Nonsense! Excuse me, but it is nonsense. Please be serious."

"Friendship, Bulwer says, is the wine of existence, and love the dram-drinking. I am afraid to taste the wine, Miss Mona, lest I should be tempted to take to the dram, which, to a man of my temperament, would be exceedingly dangerous."

"I'll never offer you the wine after that speech, sir; but I suspect you will take to the dram-drinking one of these days, and not by degrees."

"If I lived near Waverley, Miss Mona, I should be in sad danger!"

"Yes," said Lionel ; "Mr. Harcourt's wine cellar is very fine."

"Please ring the bell, papa ; these gentlemen are hinting for wine. And now, Mr. Hamilton, you must listen to my fair cousin's lecture on friendship—the same which she has just been delivering to Miss Courcy."

Constance shook her head. "I judge, from the fair cousin's face, that she declines to repeat the lecture. And *why*, may I ask, Miss Langdon ?"

"It is not worthy of repetition, sir."

"Permit me to judge, when I shall have heard it."

"She thinks you will not appreciate it, Mr. Hamilton," said Margaret.

"I am seriously distressed because of my non-appreciativeness. I confess to some doubts regarding friendship ; I look upon it as a very delightful theory. But, Miss Langdon, did you ever meet with a true friend, such an one as one can theorize concerning ?"

"I could be a true friend ; and why should I doubt the capacity of another ?"

"What is your idea of a friend ?"

She colored violently. "It is so serious," she answered, trying to smile, "I rarely give it expression."

"She thinks no one can be a true friend who is not a communicant of the church," said Margaret, quickly.

"You have misunderstood me, Miss Courcy," said Constance.

"But you do think that a person must be very good, very pious, and all that sort of thing ?"

"I think that the truest friends are those who can counsel, advise, and pray for us; who, knowing our faults, love us still, not because of our faults, but in spite of them; who sympathize with our infirmities, our difficulties and shortcomings, being sensible of their own."

"But if people love very truly," remarked *Mona*, "they cannot see the faults of the object of their love."

"Then they love an ideal of their own creating, not the real creature; and when the eyes are opened to the falsity of the ideal, all love is gone."

Mr. Hamilton, playing with a curious seal ring on his finger, at this moment dropped it, and stooped to raise it from the floor. His face was a little flushed, and he did not place the ring upon his hand again.

"Whatever friendship may be," said *Miss Harcourt*, "I know that love is universally conceded to be blind."

"Heathen love, *Mona*; but ours should be of a purer sort."

"Are you inclined to dispute this, *Mr. Hamilton*?" said *Margaret*.

"I never dispute with a lady, *Miss Courcy*."

"Because the mental capacity of a woman will not permit her to argue?"

"By no means." He bowed deferentially. "I am confident, if I attempted argument with *Miss Langdon*, I should be defeated. Did you ever observe the peculiar workmanship of this ring?" he added, turning to *Constance*.

She took the jewel, and, leaning back wearily in her seat, seemed to examine it. But *Mary Stanley* and young *Fair-*

fax begged to see the ring, and all commented on the old-fashioned chasing, and device of an anchor, with the word *L'Esperance*. Within was the motto, "Conquer thyself," which seemed to be more recently engraved.

"What does it mean?" said Mona. "'Conquer thyself.' Who ever accomplished that victory?"

"It means—" began Hamilton, but did not finish the sentence; and, stepping nearer to Constance's side, he said aloud: "May I place it on your finger, with a wish?" As he placed it on her hand, he added, in a lower tone: "The command is fulfilled—I have conquered myself."

"Make the wish public," cried Lionel.

"Oh, no!" said Mary, smiling; "then the spell would be broken!"

"Good fortune attends this ring, Miss Stanley," said Hamilton. "No charm wrought with it can ever be dispelled. I have tried its efficacy."

"Why, you look as grave," said Mona, almost impatiently, "as though you believed every word you speak. Come, let us have some music. Mr. Fairfax, do you sing sacred songs?"

"My dear Constance, what is the matter?" said Mrs. Harcourt. Her shocked tone made every one present look toward her niece. She had risen from the sofa with a face of such whiteness, that her aunt was startled.

"Nothing," she said; "I look pale sometimes."

Her smile was so forced, that Mrs. Harcourt made her reseat herself, and sent Hamilton for a glass of wine from a stand near. He addressed the aunt:

"The faintness was only momentary, madam. Her color has returned already." He offered the glass to Constance.

"The 'wine of existence'—friendship at Mr. Hamilton's hand!" cried Margaret, maliciously. "It cannot fail to restore you!"

Constance thanked him quietly. She was quite herself, and, rising, walked with Mary Stanley toward the open window. "The room is very close. May I walk out on the piazza for a few moments?"

Her aunt gave her permission, and the two young ladies disappeared.

"This little romantic episode has taken away the life and merriment of us all," said Fairfax, after a pause. "Suppose we promenade also for the benefit of the fresh air. Will you, Miss Mona?"

Hamilton and Miss Courcy preferred to remain chatting with Mrs. Harcourt, and Mona protested against the exposure to the night dews, insisting that Mary and Constance would take cold, and her mamma ought to send for them to come within doors. Her mother acted on this suggestion, and they returned, looking certainly the brighter for their moonlight stroll, Constance declaring herself quite well, and begging that no one would remark upon her paleness. "My dear aunt," she said, "are you sure it was not the reflection of the moon which made you fancy me so white?"

The gentlemen were going, when Hamilton said:

"Mrs. Fairfax is to give Bessie a birthday party, and the

little maid is very anxious that the young ladies of Waverley will honor it with their presence. Children's parties are generally amusing ; so I hope, when she gives her invitation, you will oblige her, and me also, by accepting it."

CHAPTER V.

*"My life, my joy, my soul, my all the world,
My orphan-comfort, and my sorrow's care."*

KING JOHN.

THE next day, Mrs. Fairfax paid a morning visit to Waverley, bringing Bessie Hamilton with her. The little girl was so shy, or self-willed, that she would speak to no one, not even to give her invitation to the purposed party ; and, on being coaxed to give a kiss to Mrs. Harcourt, burst into such a flood of tears as would have made an eyewitness of the scene fancy that the easy-natured, plump lady was considered by Bessie in the light of a ghoul. Constance appearing at the drawing-room door, the child flew to her arms, and clung so closely to her, that, after paying her compliments to Mrs. Fairfax, she begged to be allowed to carry her little niece away ; which request was finally granted, and Constance and her charge disappeared.

Mrs. Fairfax was a clever woman, fond of the world, good society, and clever people. She was esteemed by friends and acquaintances as a little too sarcastic ; but then, they said, "her parties are so select, her dinners so superb ;

and her husband is a charming, elegant man ; so we may as well pardon the satire, for it is only her peculiar way, and one likes a character." Her family consisted of five sons and one daughter. The eldest, Lionel, has already been presented to the reader. He was about two-and-twenty. The other children were all at college or boarding school, except the youngest, a boy of nine and a girl of twelve, who were at home, and not considered yet out of the nursery. Some fifteen years before, her youngest sister, Bessie Mortimer, had married a Mr. Oswald Hamilton, a widower with one son, a boy of ten or eleven. Mr. Hamilton had first married very early, and his wife died when their only child was four years old. His union with Miss Mortimer had seemed very happy, although there was considerable disparity in their years. Of several children by this marriage, only one survived them—Bessie, who was but a few weeks old when her parents died ; the father, as was believed, by a fall from his horse, and the mother by the shock consequent on the sudden and startling death of her husband. Edward Hamilton became, at twenty-one, entirely his own master, and the guardian of his baby sister, to whom he was most tenderly attached. Miss Susan Mortimer, a maiden sister of Mrs. Fairfax, had, at his request, assumed the charge of his household, which in all other respects remained as during his father's lifetime.

Miss Susan was one of those happy-tempered, quiet women, whom every one loves and respects. Possessing that most uncommon talent, common sense, she was the kind, ladylike mistress of the house, winning the true affection of

its young master, and the honest reverence of the servants. In one matter she may be said to have failed. Her little niece was a thoroughly spoiled child, full of caprice, impatient of reproof or contradiction; yet, notwithstanding, she was beloved for the natural sweetness of her temper, her quick wit, her winning gracefulness, and the generous impulses of her warm heart. Until of late her brother had been totally blind to her faults. To him she generally appeared most tractable. Destitute of all other natural ties, Bessie was to him perfection, his idol, his darling. No wish of hers was left ungratified, and she in turn clung to him almost as fondly. She had been spending the summer with Mrs. Fairfax, and his visits to her had been but short, yet still her faults were becoming so glaring, that his eyes were opening; and though he loved her not less fondly, the very intensity of his affection deepened the pain.

Edward Hamilton was envied by all the world, at least the world of his acquaintance—rich and talented, courted by “society,” and considered a model of fine manners and morality. “He is a promising young man,” said the fathers; “free from vice and dissipation, devoted to his profession, likely to make a figure in the world.” “Charming man, so moral, so kind hearted!” said the mothers. “So accomplished, so chivalric, so fine looking!” cried the daughters. “Lives like a prince; always ready to do a kind turn, if one is hard up!” said the sons. And what said Hamilton, the reserved and attentive student, the courteous and benevolent gentleman? “I am miserable, my life aimless, my hope dead!”

Mrs. Fairfax’s call was quite lengthy. The conversation
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turned but slightly upon Bessie. She attempted to make no apologies for her behavior, merely shrugged her shoulders, and said :

“ My sister Susan and her adored Edward have, between them, contrived to make Bessie a sufficiently amiable and docile child. I envy her brother’s wife, if he shall ever get one. Her home will be charming with such a sprite within it ! ”

“ Perhaps he would send her to boarding school by that time, or in such an event,” suggested Mona, demurely.

“ Not a bit of it, my love. That child will never be put under tutors and governors. She is predestined to rule everybody but herself. Edward is a tolerably good-tempered man, but likes no interference in his system of educating Bessie.”

“ He has a system, then ? ” said Mary Stanley.

Mrs. Fairfax laughed. “ So he says ; but I never saw it put in practice. The brother and sister are very fond of each other, and it is a pleasant sight to see them together. He is a noble, generous man ; and as for the child, despite her occasional tantrums, she is very attractive. And even her freaks and caprices are interesting, for they manifest a vast deal of genius ! ”

As Mrs. Fairfax was about leaving, Constance entered, and asked permission for Bessie to remain with her. “ She will be no trouble, and I will bring her home in the afternoon.”

“ Certainly,” said the aunt ; “ far be it from me to deprive any one of the young lady’s agreeable society ; but I am afraid you will repent, and that Mrs. Harcourt will scold me sadly for allowing her to remain at Waverley.”

"No, indeed," said that lady; "we are very fond of children."

Bessie seemed quite transformed. The traces of tears had disappeared, and she very prettily gave, at her friend's request, the invitation to her party.

"My other invitations are all written," she added, gravely; "but I thought it would be more *sociable* to give yours myself, as you are quite grown up, and have no pride."

"Is your party to be large?" inquired Margaret. "I am afraid I have no dress fit to wear, and will have to order one made."

"There are fifty notes issued. I should like you to wear a nice dress. My dolls have new frocks. You need not be very particular, though, for the gentlemen will all be little boys, and I suppose they will have as much as they can do to admire the little girls."

Every one smiled. "Pretty well for six years old, Miss Bessie! You will be a great flirt, one of these days!"

"No, I won't, Miss Courcy. Brother says flirts are silly. I am going to be wise, and know a great deal, like Miss Constance."

"Did brother say that too?" asked her aunt, with an amused face.

"I am sure he thinks so, if he did not say it."

"If you are going to be wise like me," said Constance, without the shadow of a blush, "you will have to fall in love with your spelling book, and learn to spell quite long words, like hyperbolically, phraseological, obnubilation, and——!"

"Good morning, good morning, Miss Langdon; I am afraid of you! I will see you all upon Wednesday. I will send for Bessie;" and off swept Mrs. Fairfax to her carriage.

"I am very glad she is gone," said her little niece; "she is such a *tremendous* talker."

The interval passed in Constance's room had been productive of good to Bessie. Her friend, at first, had only striven to amuse her, and had succeeded in distracting her thoughts from herself. Then, by degrees, she drew forth the secret of her especial waywardness that day. She had rebelled against the authority of her old nurse, who had been dressing her for her drive, would not allow a certain bonnet to be placed upon her head, screamed and struggled, and finally slapped nurse in the face, as she was carrying her through the hall to the carriage. Hamilton ordered the old woman away, sent for another servant to attend the child, and would not kiss her "good morning," saying he could not love a little girl who had behaved in so unladylike and cruel a manner. Bessie was too proud to show her contrition, and had retorted by saying that she did not love him, for "he cared more for ugly old nurse than for his only little sister." And so they parted. The wise and gentle teachings of Constance, and her tender interest in the motherless child, who loved her with all the fervor of her passionate nature, softened the wayward spirit; and, before she prepared for her walk home with Bessie, she had taught her a simple prayer. The little girl had grown so blithe in her anticipation of her birthday *fête*, and was so full of piquant sayings and winning loveliness, that the household of Waverley were charmed with her.

CHAPTER VI.

"Honest love, honest sorrow,
Honest work for the day, honest hope for the morrow,
Are these worth nothing more than the hand they make weary,
The heart they have saddened, the life they leave dreary ?
Hush ! the sevenfold heavens, to the voice of the Spirit,
Echo : ' He that o'ercometh shall all things inherit.' "

OWEN MEREDITH.

THE walk to Haylands—Mr. Fairfax's house—was very pleasant, and the friends chatted merrily together. It was by a more retired and shorter way they went than usual, and the birds were singing gayly in the leafy branches above their heads, as if the innocent prattle of the child and the blithe words of the maiden were but sweet responses to their own glad songs.

As she approached the gates, Constance observed Hamilton advancing toward them, and conjectured he was then *en route* for Waverley and Bessie. "Run," she cried to the child; "see, he is coming for you. Go to him, and tell him you love him."

She stood still as the repentant sister ran to the outstretched arms of the brother. She could not hear the whis-

pered "I do love you, my dear, dear brother; I am so sorry; I will never be so naughty again;" nor the answer. But she saw the child raised in the man's strong arms, and caressed again and again with devoted fondness. Then they both came toward her.

"I have brought your little pet home safely, Mr. Hamilton. Good-by, my sweet one." She stooped down to kiss the child.

"Don't go," said Bessie; "I want you to stay here."

"I must. Good-by. There is nurse waiting. Good evening, sir;" and Constance began quickly to retrace her steps. Mr. Hamilton sent the child to her attendant, saying he would return soon, and walked rapidly after Constance.

"I could not allow you to return to your uncle's alone," he said, as he joined her. "You will pardon my intrusion of myself on your society."

"I have no fear," she answered; "the walk is quite retired and safe."

He took no notice of her words, but continued to walk by her side in silence. They were a striking pair—both tall, and Hamilton unusually so, superior in height to ordinary men, yet so well proportioned as to be at no time awkward. His whole air was easy, though dignified. His features were not regular, but strongly marked; his eyes were large and fine, and of that peculiar gray which darkens so deeply during excitement, and which are more capable of expression than other eyes. He looked older than his years. There were no lines of passion in his face, but an expression of sadness and restless longing, which wrought a peculiar inter-

est in the acute observer of physiognomy, for his manner and life were at variance with the aspect of his features in repose. He turned toward his companion. Her features in their classic outline, the exquisite purity of her complexion, her form, every motion of which was graceful, combined in her the ideal of almost perfect beauty. Her thoughts seemed far away ; and yet it was not so. Her whole desire was for strength to resist the temptation which assailed her, for patience to endure ; for, under that apparently calm exterior, there dwelt a soul tossed by many conflicting emotions. The past, so full of brightness and hope, rose before her, and the future so drear. To the realities of the present she was awakened by the rich voice of Hamilton, speaking in those tones of gentleness which would soothe the tumult of thought to rest.

"I am very sensible," he said, "of your kindness to Bessie, and of your influence over her waywardness. I am grateful, believe me ; yet I know not how to thank you for a kindness which must——"

He was interrupted. "I desire no thanks. I love the child. This is the only influence I possess."

"You are very good," he replied, more coldly. Then, changing the subject: "I have seen your brother. Did I tell you ?"

"He wrote to me that he had seen you, and of your friendliness."

"My friendliness !" he repeated, bitterly. "You forget, Miss Langdon, by your own reasoning last night, I am incapacitated for being a friend to any human being."

"You wilfully misunderstand me," she said, impatiently. "I spoke but of friend in the highest sense. Of your honor, your kindness, and your warmth of heart, I have no more doubt than of my own. But there must be more than mere impulse, which may be misdirected, or feelings, which may change; there must be a principle on which to rest. I speak," she added, "fervently and candidly, true to my lasting friendship for you, and to the strong impulse of my heart, which would have you other than you are!"

She had not once looked toward him, yet her intonation was as distinct as her words were uttered rapidly and earnestly. There was a pause, and they walked on slowly. Hamilton broke the silence:

"You warned Albert against my influence. You would deprive me of the poor boy's affection! Is it meant that I shall have no one source of happiness which you in your cruel bigotry could wrest from me?"

Still never looking on him, she replied:

"Against you I never warned him, but against the fearful views of the man he was ready to respect and love. I love my brother far too dearly," she cried almost wildly, "to endure to know him destitute of faith, holding even for one hour the principles of Edward Hamilton! Have I not endured enough? Leave me. Let me return alone. This conversation is more than I can bear!"

Hamilton's whole manner changed, when he perceived her emotion. His eyes lost their sad and restless look. His voice seemed to gain inexpressible tenderness, as he spoke:

"You will not order me to leave you, Constance, my

beloved. You cannot. Your whole soul revolts against this unnatural course. If, in your first blind zeal, you would cast me off, now the affections must once more rule. Reason, also, will point to you the way which you must take, and your heart cry out in my behalf. It is madness not to hear my plea. If without you I tread this dreary earth, I am lost alike to usefulness and bliss, my life aimless, my every hope shattered — yes, forever gone. You know your power. You know what you might make me. And for yourself, O dearest, my sole joy, my heart's best treasure! once again link your fate with mine, renew again the broken vow, and there shall never one cloud darken our path; — blest in each other's love, making those dependent on us happy; your parents relieved from the difficulties which now surround them, their declining years brightened with the sunshine of our loving ministrations. Give me but the right, and never more shall the dull, carking cares of poverty and anxiety distress those dearest to you. Your parents shall take the place of those which I have lost. All which I have is theirs and yours, forever!"

He took her hand, and they stood still within sight of the entrance to Waverley. For the first time she turned her lovely eyes toward him, and seemed to drink in the very words he uttered. He pictured to her a future glowing with every earthly joy. He told her of the love so deep, so wild, so faithful, which should be ever hers; of the good which should be wrought through her to Bessie. Then, in contrast, he told her of the gloom and sadness of his life, stripped of every natural tie but the fair child he knew not how to train;

of the night of darkness through which he must grope alone ; of the wilderness of life without her, his guiding star. Constance all this time withdrew not her hand, but, when he paused, she looked upon the green turf beneath her feet, the beauteous verdure of the trees before her, and thought how peaceful was this earth ; how free from care, from taint of sorrow, might life be ; how blissful to her loved ones ; how might she lead a happy life, doing good to those most dear, and, above all, leading onward and upward to a holy faith the man to whom she was once bound (to whom she was yet bound—for how dared she break a vow so solemn?) ; and her gaze followed her thought, and rested upon the heaven above, the quiet sky. The sun was declining peacefully. “O Blessed Light ! O Only Wise ! lead, guide, strengthen me,” was her unspoken prayer. And again the last bright rays seemed like a path of glory. Clouds of darkness were floating in the sky, and yet the path was straight, and lightened alway ; crimson hued at times, like the fiery trials which beset those who would follow in the steps of the Crucified, yet lightened alway by His glorious beams. She drew her hand away from the grasp of Hamilton, and turned her pale, pale face, which now reflected the heavenly light, and beamed with the purer love toward him.

“Edward,” she said, and her voice was sweet and low, “Edward, so dear, so truly loved, do not tempt me. To your words, earnest and noble, I listen not unmoved. My heart cries out in answer, ‘Go, be to him all that he desires ; find joy for yourself unutterable.’ It cannot be. I grieve—God only knows how deeply!—for the grief I cause. I

repent—He only knows how truly!—for the rash promise made. I sorrow, I mourn in anguish more unspeakable, for the knowledge of your own darkness. Edward, I would give up all your love, my own happiness, my earthly hope, for one gleam of hope in you, one shadow of trust in the only One who can bind up your aching heart! I dare not trust myself. I should, so blest in all which made earth lovely, grow cold and lukewarm. You would never let me speak of that which is the truest source of joy. Our happiness would be empty, resting only on the fleeting sands of the weary world. I should fear to render my creed obnoxious to you, and should feel that our hopes were not one. I could be to you in no sense a guiding star, but a weak, imperfect girl, lured by an earth-born affection from the higher Love. I dare not—I dare not trust myself. It is a vain dream, a delusion of the tempter. Let it pass. Let us remember the past, but to be the more truly friends. Let me be to you another sister, ever interested in your pleasures, ever sorrowing in your griefs, ever praying for the light to shine into your heart, for the mists of darkness and error to flee away, for the Love, unspeakable and infinite, to gladden your soul!"

The face of Hamilton was haggard. His very voice grew harsh and husky, as he spoke:

" You know not, O blind fanatic! what you do. Miserable girl, so willing to cast me into wretchedness unutterable, you are mine still! Does your Christianity teach you to esteem lightly vows and truth? You would break your

plighted word ! By all you hold sacred, I swear you shall not. I hold you to your promise ! ”

“ My first duty is to a Higher than you,” she replied, gazing without fear into the fierce, gleaming eyes before her. “ When I made the promise to be yours, I knew not of your opinions. I knew you to be in some sort skeptical, but, in my happiness (why should I deny it?), I cared not to look into the truth. My parents approved ; Hope smiled, and pictured a future full of influence for good over the one to whom my heart was given. I thanked God for His goodness, yet felt I was not blessed. And, when I found my words of reproach of your cavils pained you, and you turned from my entreaties, I feared to render my faith odious to you, and left real duties unperformed. When the truth that you were in heart a total unbeliever was made known through the words you spoke, my course was plain. What part had I, that believed, with an infidel ? The struggle was severe, the trial bitter ! ”—she clasped her hands fervently—“ but He who was my only Counsellor helped me.” Her head was bowed, and she made a movement forward.

“ Go ! ” he said. “ Why should I desire the hand of the woman whose every word and look make known her doubts of my truth ? You dare not trust your happiness in my keeping ! Constance, Constance,” he cried, passionately, “ when was I ever false to you ? When I knew how dangerous it was to my hopes, I yet told you of my doubts first, of my speculations, my fruitless searches after truth, my failure in belief, and yet, forsooth, you say you love me ; and because I cannot believe that which I do not know, cannot

accept the dogmas and fancies you hold sacred, cannot bow down my reason and my intellect before an unknown God, you cast me off, you blight my whole existence, you spurn the love of one who would have died to save you from one pain! For heaven itself—if heaven there be—would be joyless without you! Is it thus you would render your religion acceptable to me? Weak girl, you have miserably failed. Never, never could I rejoice in a fanaticism which necessitates the severing of every blissful tie!"

Constance shuddered. "No grief which you can ever suffer can exceed the hopeless anguish which your words cause. I speak, I know, to deaf ears; but if you would consider, O Edward, what power must God's strength confer, that a woman so weak, so tender, can cast aside her heart's great joy! Look to those distant hills, enveloped in mist; we see them not: so we cannot see the haven of rest; our eyes cannot pierce the mists of earth; but ah! look once more—the clouds are tinted by the sun's last rays, and, even in this world, He gives a beauty and a gladness amid the trials, the disappointments which surround us, if we but endure 'as seeing Him, the Invisible!'"

They had advanced a short distance, and her hand was almost on the gate which led into the lawn of Waverley. Her voice faltered, and she turned her sad and tearless face toward Hamilton, and spoke that dreariest of words, "Farewell."

"We part here," he replied, gloomily. "As I have nothing left to hope, so have I nothing left to dread. Yet

can I say, may you find those consolations which you seek, and which are forever denied to me. Farewell."

"Constance returned home looking very tired, this evening," said her uncle, as the family assembled around the tea table. "Why is she not here?"

"She has a bad headache," answered Mona, "and has retired to the seclusion of her own apartment. I am afraid the misdemeanors of that youthful daughter of the house of Hamilton have been too much for her."

CHAPTER VII.

"Ye gentle ladies!"

SPENSER.

"A DINNER party at Haylands!" exclaimed Mary Stanley, some weeks after the scene related in the last chapter. "I would rather be hungry, than eat in that house!"

"All stuff!" said Margaret. "I went without luncheon yesterday, and found it much less agreeable even to be slightly famished, than to listen to Mrs. Fairfax's satire, and enjoy a good dinner and a laugh at other people's expense."

"I am sure," remarked Mona, "that Mrs. Fairfax has been very kind and attentive to us all; and the Glenns, and everybody else hereabout, are either too stupid or too precise to be entertaining. It is quite a relief to visit Haylands, and hear something else besides set phrases and gossip."

"Mona," cried Mary, indignantly, "do not mention the trifling gossip of those innocent Glenns with Mrs. Fairfax's sarcastic pulling to pieces of the whole community of Clifton! I never can endure patiently to hear her discoursing on poor Bessie Hamilton's misdeeds, when I see that conceited little daughter of hers offering her opinion on every

subject, and satirizing every young man, as though she, a little chit of twelve, was a fully fledged coquette!"

Mona and Margaret laughed, the first saying:

"Well, you shall not abuse my friend any longer, and to the dinner you must go this day. I suppose it is no use to ask Constance to be of the party, as Mr. Hamilton is not there, but returned, some days ago, to M——."

"I shall go with you, if you will let me," said Constance, quietly.

"I am very glad," said Mary. "You will be one roseleaf on the cup of bitterness."

"Thank you, Miss Stanley," said Margaret. "Upon my word, you are complimentary to Mona and to me."

Mary smiled her own pleasant smile in answer.

"There will be a thorn to fascinate the roseleaf," said Mona, "for Mr. Egerton will be one of the guests."

"You do not know what you missed, Constance, by your absence from Bessie's *fête*. I declare, it was very unfortunate you were sick."

"I am sorry," said Constance, with real concern in her voice; "I am sorry it did not pass pleasantly."

"But it did for us, and, in truth, for everybody, until it was almost over, and then the young princess got in a fine passion."

"Heigh-ho! I pity you, Constance," said Margaret, "if you are ever her sister-in-law; for Mr. Hamilton will make the whole world bow down before his capricious idol."

Constance vouchsafed no answer, but crocheted industriously. Miss Courcy persisted:

"I heard Mr. Egerton say that every one in M—— said the wedding was to come off in the fall. Will you send me cards?"

"When I honor any one with my hand," said Constance, blithely, although her worsted was becoming entangled, "I will honor you with cards."

"Then everybody was right, and the ceremony is to take place?"

"Everybody is wrong," was the quick reply.

"Vexed, upon my word!" rejoined the teasing Margaret. "I suppose, however, as the gossip is not true, I may venture to repeat another of Mr. Egerton's speeches, without danger of hurting your feelings. He remarked that 'Mr. Hamilton made a fool of himself over that child.'"

Constance's face crimsoned, as she answered:

"Mr. Egerton will never find it necessary to make a fool of himself over any one. That is accomplished already."

"You have been taking lessons of Mrs. Fairfax," said her tormentor, as every one looked amazed at this impatient retort, so unlike her usual self-control. "I did not know you were so fiery!"

"She takes up the cudgel for her friends," said Mary. "Good girl! I honor her."

"And cudgels other people's friends, while defending her own. Here is Mona pouting because of Mr. Egerton."

"Nonsense!" said Mona. "I cannot imagine what is the matter with you all, this morning. Margaret, you seem bent on setting everybody at loggerheads!"

"I am sure I do not know why Constance should defend

Edward Hamilton," continued Margaret, maliciously. "He is not her friend. He is not answerable to her definition of a friend. He is a rank infidel, and so was his father before him."

"That is a mistake," cried Mona. "He is the most benevolent and moral of men. I have heard papa say so over and over again!"

"That makes no difference," replied Miss Courcy. "I have heard him talk, by the hour, philosophy, materialism, and so forth. Do you think it necessary to justify such a man, Miss Langdon?"

"It is getting late," was Constance's only reply, "and I think some of those scarlet verbenas of my aunt's would be a pretty headdress for you, Margaret, your hair is so dark. I will arrange them for you with pleasure."

The young lady blushed, as she said: "Thank you."

"Constance," asked her cousin, "what do you mean to wear?"

"Oh! I shall be beauty unadorned. But I wish you all to be resplendent this evening, so you must let me be chief waiting maid, and preside at your toilettes. I will go now for the flowers;" and she stepped quickly through the open window, and they watched her as she entered the garden, and bent down to cull the flowers.

"With all my cousin's good looks," said Mona, "I never could be jealous of her. Yet she is my ideal of perfect happiness;" and she ended her sentence with a sigh.

"Mona sighing!" cried Mary. "The world must be coming to an end! Oh, Mona! how dare you be sentimental?"

"I will tell you," the little lady answered. "The milliner sent me a new bonnet, and the strings are an eighth too short; so I am weary of the world, and have taken off my rose-colored glasses, and mean to wear blue ones in future."

"They are not nearly so becoming," said Margaret.

"Then I will don the rosy-hued directly, for I desire to be as captivating as possible on all occasions."

"*Apropos* of captivations, fascinations, and the like," said Mary, "I hope, Mona, that you will protest against Constance's fancy for wearing a white dress and no ornaments to-night. Mrs. Fairfax will be certain to denominate her 'sweet simplicity.'"

"My dear, do not mention that poor woman's name again. I cannot help her being the bitterest and most sarcastic of dowagers!"

"If you have so much consideration for the lady of Haylands, you ought to have some pity for her son," said Margaret. "He looked as if in the depths of woe, the other night, when you were flirting with that gloomy Mr. Maxwell. By the way, he is the man you met at the river side, last June. How do you like him, Mona?"

"Oh! tolerably. He is rather unlike other people."

"I have done some naughty things in my day," pursued Miss Courcy, "but I never treated any man as shabbily as Mona treats Lionel Fairfax."

"Do not distress yourself about him, my gentle Marguerite. If I observe that he is looking ill this evening, I will send him, to-morrow, some rouge, with Miss Courcy's earnest entreaties that he will use it to 'enliven the extreme paleness of his complexion!'"

"What are you talking about?" said Mrs. Harcourt, entering.

"Margaret says some of her friends are invalidish, and I am prescribing homeopathic treatment. Do you approve, mamma?"

Mrs. Harcourt was about to express some polite solicitude, when she was informed that the feeble friends were fictions of Mona's brains. The mother laughed, and evidently considered the fictions of Mona's brain more agreeable than any one else's truth.

At this moment the messenger with the daily letters was espied, and Mary Stanley flew to the porch to meet him.

"Any letters for me, James?"

The reply was satisfactory, for he produced some half-dozen epistles, with which she reentered the library, and distributed to their several owners.

"For Margaret, one; for Constance, two; and the rest I claim."

"Ah!" sighed Mona, "nobody writes to me. I am ever in debt; I have no time for correspondence. Any news, Mary?"

"Yes—no—yes." She was so engrossed in her letters, she knew not how she answered, and Mona forbore to tease her; and, beckoning Constance from the garden, she said: "Here are two letters: one in auntie's well-known chiromancy; the other in an unknown, unfamiliar, manly hand. Who is it from?"

"I will not tell you," laughed Constance; and yet she blushed scarlet, and why, she could not have told.

"I will tell Mr. Hamilton, upon my word I will!" said Margaret, looking up, "if you carry on correspondence with other gentlemen. That blush was very suspicious."

"I know you are jealous," replied Constance, good-humoredly, "because I received two letters, and you but one. Fie, Miss Courcy!"

The next moment they heard her singing, as she tripped up stairs, that she might read her letters quietly.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Where duty lies,
There is highest sacrifice."

THE BAPTISTERY.

IN an unpretending house in a pleasant street of the city of M—, years before civil strife and rebellion marred the glory and happiness of our land, dwelt a certain family who will be of some importance in this story. Mr. Langdon's family consisted of a wife, daughter, and son. He was a man of limited means, but of ability and attainments, and a lawyer by profession. Of late he had met with heavy losses, and it was with bitter regret he had found it necessary to recall his son from college. Proud of his boy's talents and success, and himself a scholar, with all a scholar's extravagant belief in a full collegiate course, he had endured for a time many anxieties, and concealed many difficulties, in the hope that he should be able to permit his son to complete his term. But it was a vain hope; and now, on the afternoon of which we write, he was expecting the arrival of Albert.

The small parlor was the picture of home enjoyment,

Its plain furniture tastefully arranged; the flowers freshly gathered for the vases; the books well chosen for the library, which occupied a place in one corner. The piano was opened, and music on the stand. Mr. Langdon's daily papers, and a late number of a magazine with uncut leaves, lying on a table by the side of his wife's workbasket, well filled with useful articles, as only mothers' baskets are. Mrs. Langdon was seated in her easy chair, her sewing laid aside, and her pleasant, comely face turned to her husband, who, standing silently by the window, was looking gloomily into the street.

"Albert will soon be here," she said, in her cheerful voice, "and he will be so glad to be home again!"

"Not under such circumstances," was the bitter reply.

"He is always happy with us," she pursued; "and, my dear, young people do not feel these things as we older ones; and there are, I believe, brighter days in store for us all. Do not grieve. Let us greet him cheerfully, and, in spite of every trouble, be thankful for our united family, and home love and hopes!"

She rose and walked to his side, and laid her hand upon his arm. That gentle touch seemed to work a charm. The brow cleared, and the grave face was lighted by a smile.

"Home is always most dear to me," he said; "and if those for whom I only live and labor are well and happy, I can bear all things."

As he ceased to speak, a carriage drove to the door, and in a few moments Albert Langdon was affectionately embracing his mother, and lovingly and cheerfully greeting his

father. No allusion was made to the cause of his return, and his bright presence lent a charm to the whole house.

"How delightfully cosey everything looks," he said. "Except that I miss Constance, the house and its appointments seem more attractive than ever. By the way, when is my runaway sister to return?"

"Very soon," replied his father. "She writes that she is homesick."

"That speaks well for you and my mother, sir, and for this delectable city, that Constance, amid all her parties and 'tea fights' at Clifton, should be pining for home. I met Mr. Hamilton on the cars to-day, and he said she was looking well."

"Was Mr. Hamilton very pleasant?" asked the mother.

The boy laughed. "I know he has always been a favorite here, so it will be heterodox, I suppose, to think anything else."

"He is like the rest of the world, I fancy," said the father. "His manners accord with the changing fortunes of his acquaintance. You will have to learn that, my son."

"We ask no favors from him," said Albert, proudly. "He may adopt those manners which suit him."

"I cannot believe that he is *purse* proud," said Mrs. Langdon, gently. "He has been as attentive to our children as to those of the rich, and has seemed, my dear, to court our friendship, rather than to slight us. When he has met you, of late, he has been friendly and respectful, so you have reported. Perhaps some matter had annoyed or distressed him to-day."

"It is the duty of woman to excuse and extenuate," remarked her husband, with a smile.

"And very well is that duty performed by my mother, sir," rejoined Albert, laughing. And then the conversation turned on the boy's college life, and he related anecdotes of companions, tutors, scholars, and professors, till summoned to the dining room. There everything received its due share of praise. No cookery was like home cookery; no tea table so inviting, in Albert's opinion. During the entire evening he warded off every approach to any painful subject, and was sure to commence, at the appearance of danger, a discussion with his father on the propriety of drinking strong coffee three times a day, or some equally improving topic. But when family prayers were over, and good-nights spoken, Mr. Langdon, as he shook hands with his son, said :

"And you make no mention of regret for the breaking up of your hopes and plans?"

"I have no regrets, dear father. I can learn more wisdom, if I will, from your lips, than from those of other men, be they ever so learned. I have made good use of my time thus far, at college; and now, God willing, may I be no longer a care to you, to whom I owe more than I can ever repay, but rather a blessing and help." Albert paused, but the father bowed his head, and spoke not. "Do not grieve for me," continued the son. "Believe me, I am happy and content. If I had remained longer absent, I should have become good for nothing. I need home rules and advice; and oh! believe, also, that this cloud will soon be lifted. Hope! hope!"

"I see the silver lining even now," said the father. "We are drawing closer to each other amid our very carking cares; heart nearer to heart; sharers alike in joy and sorrow. God bless you, my noble son! Good night."

CHAPTER IX.

“ Woman, contented in silent repose,
Enjoys in its beauty life’s flower as it blows,
And waters and tends it with innocent heart;
Far richer than man with his treasures of art,
And wiser, by far, in her circle confined,
Than he with his science and flights of the mind.”

FROM THE GERMAN.

ON the same day on which Albert Langdon returned to his father’s house, Edward Hamilton returned to his home. As one picture has been drawn, so let us draw another. The two homes were not remote from each other, though the Hamilton mansion was situated on a more fashionable avenue. As its master was driving toward his own door, he saw, from the carriage window, Albert arriving at his place of destination.

Hamilton alighted before the spacious house he called his own, and, dismissing the hackman, carried his portmanteau up the wide steps, and, opening the door with his private key, entered quietly. The library was empty, the blinds closed to keep out the glare of the afternoon sun; and then ascending the stairs, he tapped lightly at the door of Miss Susan’s usual sitting room. There was no answer, and he

found that likewise empty. At that moment a servant appeared, and greeted him joyfully, yet with surprise :

“ We did not expect you, sir ! Miss Susan is out, for we thought you were with Miss Bessie, sure enough.”

“ Are you all well, Spencer ? ”

“ Yes, sir. And how is the young lady ? ”

“ Very well, thank you ; and she sent her love to you all ! ”

The servant smiled delightedly. “ Do bring her home soon, Mr. Hamilton, 'cause the house is no house at all without her ! But, bless my soul, you hain't had nothing to eat ! ”

“ I wish for nothing—thank you, Spencer. Tell Rachel I will wait for Miss Mortimer ; then she may send us a good dinner. Take my bag to my room, and bring my letters and papers there. When Miss Susan returns home, call me.”

But Hamilton was restless. He looked carelessly over his letters, and walked impatiently up and down his apartment. The house seemed intensely still and desolate. Even his cigar failed to satisfy, and he threw it away before it was half smoked. He wandered to the library, threw open the shutters—for, a true masculine, he abhorred dark rooms—took up a book, turned listlessly its pages, and finally threw it down in disgust, and fell into a reverie so gloomy, that his heavy brows were knitted, and his thin lips compressed. His thoughts proved so engrossing, that he did not hear the sound of the bell, or Miss Mortimer's delighted exclamation when informed of his arrival. It was the touch of her soft hand which roused him ; and the greeting over, she said, so

gently, "I am very sorry not to have been here when you came. The house must have seemed sufficiently lonely, with no one here to welcome you," that the desolate feeling was fast passing away from his heart.

She was a woman of forty-five, or thereabout, of a slender figure and placid face, full of womanly gentleness, though no beauty of feature. It was, as Mrs. Gatty would say, "the human face divine" which lent its wondrous charm. The divine within was beaming brightly from every lineament, as she, with feminine instinct, discerned his depression and sadness, and, like a ministering angel, would bring balm. Hamilton felt its power. He sometimes called her "aunt," and the name sounded very sweet as he spoke it now.

"Ah, Aunt Susan, I must not leave you again. It is you who must be lonely; and we must have Bessie home. We are both happier with you—within the magic of your influence, the reach of your wise words, and the power of your true heart!"

The praise was very acceptable. She smiled, as she said:

"O flatterer! you are truly welcome home. Now tell me of the little one, and the whole household of Haylands."

All questions were answered, and his sister's loving messages given; then he told her of Mrs. Fairfax's kindnesses, forbearing to mention her satire; related all the incidents of his day's journey, for he was a man of quick observation, and fond of brightening his home with humorous chat and lively anecdote. Miss Susan often said, "Edward is unlike other young men; he is so very mindful of little things,

which make home conversation. If he takes a tour, I enjoy it all in his relation of it, and have none of the fatigues of journeying."

"How was Miss Langdon?" inquired the good lady, when dinner was almost over, and they were enjoying the dessert.

"Very well, I believe. By the way, I met the brother to-day. What is he doing home at this season?"

"He is come for good, his mother tells me. His father's means are more limited, therefore I suspect he cannot afford the expenses of college education;" and Miss Mortimer sighed a little.

"Are there any news?" inquired Mr. Hamilton.

"None, I fancy, except that George Fairchild is to be married in September."

"Who is the unfortunate woman to be victimized?"

"Jane Calthorp."

"Upon my honor, a well-matched pair! George is a fool, and the fair Jane is—— I beg your pardon! I had like to have said, a simpleton. I only mean that she is *less* of an angel than women generally. Her wings are not yet fully grown!"

"Have you not learned to appreciate my sex as we deserve?"

"I value all your sex, *ma chere tante*, for your sake."

"But you have not lost your heart! Are there no ladies in Clifton sufficiently fair to entrap you? I think I must choose you a wife!" she added, laughing.

"Truly you are degenerating into a matchmaker," he

replied. "Are you so anxious to get rid of me, that you recommend the awful step of matrimony ?"

"Indeed, Edward, you are not fit to be alone," Miss Mortimer answered, with a semi-serious air.

"Indeed, Miss Susan, you have a high opinion of my abilities and capacities!—that I, a great giant of a fellow, cannot take care of myself! Do you not perceive that I am predestined to bachelorhood—that I am 'charmed from the passion that others feign or feel?'"

"I perceive no such thing," she replied.

"My dear madam, you are a maiden lady, and the best woman I know. May I not also live single, and be happy?"

"Because women are different from men, I say, no. We can always find something on which to rest our affections, and we always will. Domestic life is everything to a woman. She will discover some object to which to cling—brothers and sisters, when parents are gone, or the children of others—and, so doing, win for herself joy and peace; at least, content. But a man, if he has no home ties, no family, will be immersed in business or politics, and lose heart, and become cold and selfish, or hard and cynical; or else he will dream away his life, indulging in idle fancies and longings, and thoughts of what might have been, or what should be—useless, and unhappy. I cannot say all this clearly and distinctly as you would, did you believe as I; but I am right! Man needs a wife to soften and refine him."

"Stop! stop!" cried the young man, with a smile. "Do not argue the point, or I shall be forced to become a second

Cœlebs in search of a wife, and consider it obligatory to find one before Monday! You may manœuvre as you please for Bessie, when she is old enough; but let me go my own way, Aunt Susan."

"You will do that, whether I will or not," said the lady, laughing. "You are rather a promising youth, but possess the true masculine traits of obstinacy and self-will. Now go to my little parlor; you will find it more cheerful than the library. Take as many books as you please, and I will join you by and by."

When Miss Mortimer joined Hamilton, she found him reclining at full length on her sofa, a table by his side covered with papers and legal-looking documents, and he consulting his books."

"I have taken possession," he said, rising to give her a seat. "I do not know how you, the pattern of neatness, can tolerate all the disorder I have brought into your snug retreat."

"Sit still, or rather lie still," she said; "this room is Liberty Hall to you; you can do what you like here."

"Suppose I should adopt a Yankee fashion, and whittle sticks?"

"There is a point," was the reply. "'There is a point beyond which forbearance ceases,' and so forth—you know the rest!"

He again took possession of the sofa, but adopted a more dignified position in Miss Susan's honor.

"Before you commence reading," she said, "I wish you to look at my collection of prints. Do not elevate your eye-

brows, and look distressed. I assure you, you have never seen these before."

She handed to him the portfolio, and, seating herself in her easy chair, took up her work. Hamilton examined the engravings, criticizing and commanding. At length there was a silence, and the lady looked up. He had tossed the album aside with a gesture of aversion.

"How came you by that face?" he asked, pointing to the opened leaves which disclosed an engraving of a man, whose turbaned head and fantastic dress denoted a fancy piece.

"I think it very handsome," she remarked, her astonishment increasing. "I am almost afraid, now, to say I noticed a resemblance to you, which first attracted me."

The look he turned upon her convinced Miss Mortimer that he would almost rather his face were branded, than that it should resemble the portrait before him.

"It is the perfect likeness of a man I met of late."

"Who is he? What has he done?"

"Maxwell is his name. I have never met him but once, at Clifton. My dislike is instinctive; his very presence oppresses me with a feeling of abhorrence. Let us talk of something else," he added, impatiently.

But they talked of nothing for a long time. Hamilton was too much occupied with his books and papers for conversation; and when, at last, he rose, and, drawing a chair nearer to Miss Susan, asked if he should read aloud, she gladly agreed. Listening to the beautiful story of Thiodolf, rendered the more attractive by the mellifluous voice of the reader, she forgot to marvel concerning the strange Maxwell, and the mysterious picture.

CHAPTER X.

"What is truth!—A staff rejected."

WORDSWORTH.

THE high qualities of Hamilton had for Albert a peculiar fascination. The youth had first been flattered by the notice of one so much his superior in years, and who was so universally esteemed for his talents and attainments. Edward's chivalric spirit and poetic temperament, strongly tinged with romance, had awakened a chord of sympathy, and aroused all the sentiment of Albert's nature. He had never manifested, in his intercourse with the latter, any mindfulness of the disparity between them of age and knowledge; had at no time adopted a patronizing or condescending manner; and, until of late, they had been like an older and younger brother, and apparently as fondly attached. It should be understood that the young student, long absent from home, had no knowledge, by the advice of her parents, of Constance's engagement made and broken with Edward.

Thus the marked reserve and coldness of Hamilton on their last meeting had greatly wounded Albert's sensitive pride, keenly alive, as he was at that time, to any apparent

slight. In his boyish resentment, he could make no allowance for the shortcomings of the man. He had been some time at home, when he chanced to pass, one evening, by the house of his *ci-devant* friend. Miss Mortimer was seated by an opened window of the drawing room. She beckoned to him, and, making him stop, insisted that he should enter the house. He was assured of her entire loneliness, as Hamilton would not return home until late; and if Albert would but join her, she would be very grateful, and they could enjoy a sociable cup of tea together. Her cordiality and cheerfulness were irresistible, and the anger caused by his friend's supposed estrangement was fast vanishing. Thus Miss Susan found him an agreeable and lively companion, and enjoyed many accounts of New England old-fashioned, amusing customs, given in the boy's graphic style.

"Do you know, Miss Mortimer, that you ought not to ask me if I choose cream and sugar in my coffee, but whether I take it 'dressed or undressed,' 'trimmed or untrimmed?' Constance, who does not use sugar, declares she would answer, in reply to the first question, a 'demi-toilette!' I suspect the Eastern dames would fancy she was using profane language!"

"But do you take sugar?" inquired Miss Susan, when the laugh was over; "or are you like your sister?"

"I have not outgrown my childish fondness for sweets," replied Albert. "I am possessed, not of one sweet tooth only, but a whole set." Spencer immediately handed him a sugar bowl. "Ah," said Albert, turning to the former subject, "the New Englanders are not all of the class described.

There are, besides great cultivation and geniality, warm, true hearts there. The acquaintances I made while at college will always be remembered with gratitude and respect."

"And you did not become tainted with skepticism while absent from home," remarked Miss Susan. "I dread the long absences from parental influence for youths whose characters are just forming."

"The faith which has been taught from infancy is not easily overthrown, Miss Mortimer. Before we could speak plainly, our mother taught us prayer. I have heard her say, that she made us to kneel reverently, while she repeated a brief prayer for us, to which we were instructed to say 'Amen.' Our hearts went upward before we knew why. We never knew what it was to reason of the existence of a God; our faith sufficed. We believed."

Miss Susan sighed; and the youth continued :

"My father's letters to me were a great safeguard; they were so wise, affectionate, and faithful. I have preserved every one. It is good to be thus strengthened in the little world of college life. One has then, in very truth, need of 'wisdom and counsel.'"

They were chatting over the tea table, when the hall door opened suddenly, and Hamilton's quick step was heard.

"He has come!" exclaimed Miss Mortimer. "I am so glad he can see you, Albert."

Albert could not very politely echo this rejoicing, for, as he cogitated over this anticipated meeting, he wished himself under the paternal roof in Belmont street; for the young gentleman had a vast deal of pride, which, at this time, sug-

gested unpleasant thoughts on being found under Hamilton's roof, uninvited by its master.

But that master's voice was heard calling out merrily, from his position before the hat stand :

"Ungrateful woman! I have been belated on your account, and you have not waited for me!"

"You told me, O forgetful man!" was the rejoinder, "not to wait; you would not be home until ten or eleven o'clock! However, I am glad you are arrived. Spencer, bring some hot coffee."

"And let it be strong, Spencer," added Edward, overhearing the order as he advanced to the dining room. He entered quickly the apartment, and, not observing Albert, he walked to Miss Susan, and presented, with a low obeisance, a bouquet of superb flowers.

"Beneficent lady," he said, raising, with extravagant and mock gallantry, the pleased woman's hand to his lips, "my business was more quickly accomplished than I anticipated. Being in the vicinity of a florist's, and recalling your recent lament over the failure of some flowers planted by your own fair hands, I procured this fragrant bouquet, daring to hope that it would be accepted for the sake of the worthy donor!"

The good aunt thanked him warmly, then pointed out Albert, who was very sensible of being *de trop* in this home scene. The face of Hamilton was a little flushed by the surprise of seeing any one, and by the knowledge that his grandiloquent speech had been heard, and his fantastic manner observed by a stranger. But a gentleman is not only courte-

ous, but cordial, in his own house, and he greeted his guest as he desired, and put his proud reserve to flight. Edward was so genial in his mood, so full of gay humor and brilliant wit, that the youth was more fascinated than ever. At length they adjourned to the library, and any book therein was placed at the disposal of Albert.

“How very good you are, sir!” cried he, delightedly. “What ‘feasts of reason’ you must enjoy here! Mr. Hamilton, you should be a very wise man! Ah, here are the German works to which you alluded a while ago—German theology, metaphysics, and transcendentalism. Are you not in danger?” he added, archly.

“Wherefore?”

“Because those works, or those of a like character, fill the mind with doubts; and, a doubt once admitted, others are sure to follow; these end in infidelity or skepticism.”

“So I am told by my counsellors. When you are older, Albert, you will desire to investigate, and reason for yourself. Such minds as yours are never content with the researches of others. You will seek for truth, you will grasp after more knowledge. You will discover that that which you believe is truth to you, and that in which you have no faith does not exist for you.”

“But,” answered Albert, earnestly, “the plants grow, though a blind man does not perceive them; the rain falls, although, shut within four walls, we do not feel the drops; and Truth is a *reality*—it exists independent of ourselves or our beliefs.”

No more was said on the subject, and the conversation

was changed. Albert described how he had endeavored, that evening, to fill the place of Hamilton while he was absent, and how, in the atmosphere of that house, he had felt himself growing like its master.

"A second edition of Edward," said Miss Susan.

"But an abridged edition!" cried the laughing youth, glancing at his friend's decided advantage in size. The smile with which Hamilton had greeted this jest faded from his lips, as the remembrance of Constance's excited words came to his mind: "I could not endure to have my brother hold the views of Edward Hamilton for one hour!"

"Do not imitate me, if you wish for happiness," he said; and from this moment, until Albert's departure, a something of restraint stole over each one. The lady thanked him pleasantly for his pleasant society, and begged that he would brighten them again with his presence. But Hamilton, although he accompanied his guest to the door, and courteously bade him "good evening," even desiring his compliments to his parents, did not ask him to repeat his visit; and Albert thought how variable were the moods of this young man, and that, after all, the visit had not been welcome to the host.

Miss Susan was very quiet over her sewing that night, as Edward and she sat together in the library. He wrote letters for a while, then finished aloud the story of Fouqué's *Icelander*, the perusal of which had been discontinued for some evenings past.

"We have been a long time reading it," he remarked, when the book was completed. "It is a beautiful and touching story. Do you like it?"

"Very much ;" but Miss Mortimer's lips were a little tremulous, and presently she gathered her work together, and said : "Good night, and pleasant dreams, dear 'Thiodolf.' "

"You must not call me Thiodolf," he replied, with a forced laugh. "I have not found the 'Lady Isolde.' "

His companion's eyes filled with tears. "Nor yet the 'White CHRIST,'" she added, in a low voice. •

Hamilton's brow clouded darkly. "Not one word more," he said, gravely. "It was agreed, long since, that one topic should never be discussed between us, nor broached to one another. It is as painful a subject to me as to you. Dear Miss Susan, I leave you to your faith. Leave me without reproaches to my unbelief."

The song of the nuns of St. Sophia stirred the soul of Thiodolf, but no holy chant was heard by Hamilton that night. Yet, in the silence of their own apartments, for him two hearts were lifted upward, for him two women knelt and prayed.

CHAPTER XI.

Without good company, all dainties
Lose their true relish, and, like painted grapes,
Are only seen, not tasted." MASSINGER.

MRS. FAIRFAX received her guests graciously; and, though Constance wore a white dress, and no ornaments but natural flowers, to no one was she pointed out as "sweet simplicity;" thus Mary Stanley's prediction was not verified. Mona was consigned to the care of Mr. Maxwell, at dinner; and so brilliant and engrossing was her conversation with the handsome stranger, that Lionel Fairfax, at his post beside Miss Glenn, was half mad with jealousy. Miss Glenn was a quiet, inoffensive young woman, neither pretty nor plain, neither tall nor short, neither stout nor thin. She was a sort of person one must "describe in negatives." Lionel was very sensible of this, as he endeavored to commence a flirtation with her, in opposition to Miss Harcourt's fascinating coquettices with John Maxwell. "Miss Stanley," he said, *sotto voce*, to Mary, as Miss Glenn's attention was engaged for a moment by Dr. Caxton, "this lady has no more sentiment than a napkin ring!"

"That article is very useful, and sometimes ornamental," responded Miss Stanley, dryly. "For my part, I consider the person in question very amiable."

"Amiability is not sentiment. I would as soon be shot as called amiable. Amiable people are always stupid, and stupid people are not fit to live!"

"Who is not fit to live?" said Mr. Egerton, overhearing the last words.

"Mr. Fairfax has pronounced a sentence of condemnation on a large number of his fellow creatures," said Mary.

"Are you, Miss Stanley, to execute his decree? A dose of strychnine, administered by your fair hands, would be like the ambrosial nectar, and despoiled of all poisonous power!"

Mr. Egerton's attempts at gallantry were so prodigious, that Mary could scarcely command her countenance.

"Do not hint at any one making away with you, sir!" cried Mrs. Fairfax. "It is too appalling a consideration even in jest. Whom would we have to set us right in matters of taste? By the way, what did you think of Mr. Dalben's lectures on English literature?"

"Very tolerable—quite fair, I might say. But they were scarcely more than readings of the different authors," replied Mr. Egerton; and he continued to converse with the mistress of the house, in such a manner as to show his familiarity with elegant literature; but so conceited and so critical he proved, that Mary could scarcely endure the sound of his harsh voice. Her favorite authors were judged without mercy. The poets of the day were, in his opinion, scarcely

worth notice ; and she thought that, as poor Keats died because of the severe treatment of the Scotch reviewers, so was she likely to expire, if this terrible critic did not cease his cruel discourse.

The dessert was brought, and the conversation became general, to her great relief. The gentlemen gave spicy accounts of the steps taken to prevent the frequent recurrence of burglaries in their midst.

“ During the past winter, the whole male community of Clifton were resolved into a Vigilance Committee, as far as I could discover,” said Mr. Egerton. “ The women were trembling with fear at night, while doors were trebly locked, and windows quadruply barred. I believe that miserable Bob White is the chief of the gang.”

“ I agree with you, sir,” said Mrs. Fairfax.

“ So do I,” cried Mona. “ I know it is so.”

“ Ah, indeed, Miss Mona ! ” said the elder Mr. Fairfax ; “ I shall feel it necessary to have you brought forward as a witness. I defended that man last winter, when he was tried, and he was acquitted in default of sufficient evidence to convict. But now that you and Mrs. Fairfax are so well assured of his guilt, I shall feel it my duty to deliver him up to justice, and subpoena you both as witnesses ! ”

Mona looked rather confused. “ Well, sir,” she said, with a little blush which became her well, “ he is a dreadful man, and I cannot see how you could defend him, sir ! ”

“ Ah, I perceive,” remarked the master of Haylands, “ Miss Mona is an advocate of the Lynch law, which would hang a man without judge or jury.”

"Every man should be considered innocent, until proven guilty," said Constance, gently. "Give him, at least, the benefit of the doubt."

"Who speaks those wise words?" inquired Mr. Fairfax, leaning forward to listen.

"I am a lawyer's daughter," answered Constance, with a heightened color, "so I must venerate the profession which my father loves and honors; a profession which, while it advocates justice, and does battle for law and order, tempers that justice with mercy."

"A noble defence!" cried the lawyer.

"Come, Miss Constance," said the Doctor, "say something in our favor. We poor physicians need a word of commendation."

She shook her head.

"Not one word! Is it possible you can be so cruel?"

"Cruel, because I will not compliment him! Consider the vanity of the man! Oh, Mr. Fairfax! pronounce his sentence, and do not this time temper justice with mercy!"

"I sentence him to banishment from the society of the ladies for one half hour. I see Mrs. Fairfax is rising."

So the ladies retired; the gentlemen were left alone.

Bessie made her appearance in the drawing room, and Carrie Fairfax also. "How insufferably warm it is!" remarked the latter young lady, with a sufficient degree of affectation.

"My dear," said her mamma, "we are sorry to learn your opinion. We were quite comfortable before, but, since we heard your words, the thermometer has risen several degrees!"

The child reddened, but did not dare to reply to the sarcasm ; so she reminded Miss Langdon, in a low voice, of her promise to sing for her the next time they met, and that amiable girl was soon on the lawn with the two children. When the gentlemen assembled, Mrs. Fairfax sent Dr. Caxton in search of Constance. As he neared a rustic arbor at some distance from the house, he heard singing. Pausing to listen, his ears were greeted by the words of an old nursery ballad. The voice of the songstress was often quite lost in the laughter of the little girls, and his abrupt entrance startled them all. He soon made friends with "Queen Bess," and, in entire forgetfulness of Mrs. Fairfax's message, he threw himself on the grass at the feet of Constance, and listened with infinite amusement to "The frog he would a-wooing go." The young lady was just singing the last "cairo, kimo, delta, cara, kimo," when again she was interrupted, and this time by the appearance of Edward Hamilton and Margaret Courcy. The lady was leaning on the gentleman's arm, her eyes dancing with intense enjoyment, and her lips parted, to say : "Go on. Do not stop singing. Do not stir. You have no idea what an interesting group you form !" There was something in the triumphant tone which struck Constance unpleasantly. She felt angry that she had yielded to the spirit of gayety roused by the delight of the children in her foolish songs. Moreover—why, she could not have told—she wished the Doctor at that instant anywhere but at her feet, in the easy attitude he had assumed.

Bessie sprang toward her brother, and was plying him with a dozen questions in one breath, and then caressing him

with childlike, graceful fondness. Explanations were vouchsafed by Miss Courcy.

"Mr. Hamilton arrived unexpectedly, while we were at dinner, and would not allow the servants to announce him; would not even have made himself visible, if I had not encountered him on the porch in search of Bessie, and guided him here, lured by the sweet sounds of your voice, Miss Langdon!"

"I am in no costume for dinner parties," said he, glancing at his travelling dress and linen duster. "Miss Courcy must pardon my apparent rudeness in not joining the ladies in the drawing room immediately upon my arrival."

His manner was perfectly easy, and he accosted Constance with the utmost *sang froid*. She could discover no trace of the offended, grieving lover, the proud, dreamy skeptic, or the tender, unselfish, loving, home heart. He was but the gay, fashionable man of the world, entirely self-possessed, with flattering nothings on his tongue's end for women, and clever talk for men. When the whole party reached the drawing room, Margaret gave, in her usual tone of raillery, an account of Miss Langdon's concert and audience. The Doctor was much bantered for his forgetfulness of the message intrusted to him, and enjoyed the jokes with such evident pleasure, that Constance grew more annoyed, for some reasons inexplicable to herself. Mr. Egerton came to the Doctor's rescue; said he did not "marvel that he should forget all duties while listening to the voice of the syren, and paid many compliments of a like nature, which were received by Constance with a sort of proud composure. Bessie in-

sisted upon the repetition of a story told before by her friend, and the repetition was declined.

"Do not annoy Miss Langdon," said Hamilton, drawing his sister toward him.

"Are you angry, Miss Constance?" said the child.

"No."

But the answer was colder than usual. Yet Bessie persisted :

"Then tell all about the apples to eat, and the nuts to crack——"

"What nonsense is the child talking?" Come here!" cried her brother, imperiously.

"I am not talking nonsense. It's all in a ghost story. The ghost came out, and said to the children, and to the dog, and to the pussy cat——" She was interrupted by shouts of laughter from almost every one present. It was more than she could endure. She thought the merriment was at her expense, and symptoms of an approaching storm were visible on her countenance. "You are very rude, all of you. Miss Constance told the story, and she is nice and pretty, and never laughs at me. I like her *such a many, many* more times than you; and nobody else in the room, except my brother, is worth a pin!" She enforced every sentence by a stamp of her little foot; and her utterance, although rapid, was so distinct not one word was lost.

Hamilton raised the excited child in his arms, and escaped with her through the doors. Lionel shrugged his shoulders, and expressed a hope that nobody thought that temper came from the Fairfax side of the house. Mr. Max-

well elevated his handsome eyebrows, and had no doubt the amiable brother would quiet the young lady; and Margaret congratulated Constance, in a low voice, on winning the favor of so influential a member of the Hamilton family. Mrs. Fairfax led the way to the piano. After a little music, adieux were made, and the whole party broken up. Edward Hamilton did not again make his appearance.

CHAPTER XII.

“Was there no poetry in such a transit? You will confess that the railroad is not without romance.”

SUMMER LAND.

CONSTANCE’s letters contained permission, even a desire, for her return home. She therefore wrote, appointing the day on which she should proceed *en route* for her native city. Mr. Harcourt protested against her immediate departure, as did the household generally; her uncle especially, because she must journey unattended. He could provide her no escort. But she persisted in her determination, declaring that they were very lonely at home, and positively expected her; besides, her mamma was not very well. This last argument proved conclusive, and a reluctant consent was given. Mr. Harcourt saw her safely placed in the car, her baggage checked, and then, bidding her an affectionate farewell, and wishing her a pleasant journey, left her.

Constance had never travelled alone. Her father had trained her to a dislike for a woman’s solitary journeyings. Thus she threw her shawl upon an unoccupied portion of the seat, and placed her travelling bag upon it, in the hope that no one would take the place. She commenced to peruse her

book in tranquillity. Persons were passing to and fro ; boys with magazines and newspapers, candies, and ivory needle-cases. Several stoppages had been made, but she was regardless of all interruptions, until some one inquired gruffly, "Is this seat taken, ma'am ?" She looked up, startled. The questioner was a rough, dissipated-looking man ; but there was no help for it, for she noticed, for the first time, that the car was crowded. The shawl and bag were removed, and, with a rude stare at the lovely face beside him, the man took his seat. Constance had recourse again to her book, but it did not seem interesting. An hour passed, when her companion, whose coat was filled with the odor of poor tobacco, handed her his paper, which was civilly but coolly declined. He then seemed disposed to enter into conversation, and began to talk familiarly of the route, until she drew down her veil, and turned toward the window. The train had stopped. She saw, standing on the platform of the station, Mr. Hamilton. Her heart beat joyfully—if he would but see her ! Their eyes met. He bowed, and entered the next car. Poor Constance ! She sat revolving in her mind whether he fancied some one was escorting her ; if he knew she was alone, he must come to her. Then she remembered his cold indifference of late, and the bitter thought that he had fled from love to resentment filled her soul. Her companion offered no more remarks, which was one source of consolation, but he stared at her every time she turned her head. Though she pretended to read, her brain took no note of the words.

At length the door opened. She looked toward the new-

comer, and this time Hamilton approached her. He gave a glance of surprise at the rough man, and said :

"Alone ! are you travelling alone ? Impossible !"

"My uncle could procure me no escort. I am not afraid, only a little lonesome."

"So very improper ! He should have attended her himself," muttered Edward. She could read in his face that he considered her course very unfeminine. If he had been any one else, his gentlemanly distaste for such a proceeding would have amused her, it was so strongly marked.

There was a vacant place now opposite, and he addressed her companion with that peculiar grace of manner which was irresistible, requesting him to take the unoccupied seat, and allow him to be near the lady, who was a friend. The man complied, and, with courteous acknowledgment of the favor, Mr. Hamilton seated himself beside Constance.

"I am very grateful," she said, heartily. He saw the truth of her words written in the dark eyes, and immediately his resolution was made. Not by word or look would he render the journey unpleasant. She should feel no constraint in his presence. Well he kept the resolve. The effort which it cost him was not apparent. His easy manner, his discourse of things unimportant, all contributed to render Constance almost as composed as he. All his attentions were delicate and considerate. He forestalled every wish ; she had no need to ask favors. She smiled at his witty comments on those whom they encountered, almost as naturally as she would have done six months before.

He seemed so unconscious of his marvellous power, that

her womanly pride was never wounded by the thought, "He knows his ability to charm me. He knows I have no choice but to find pleasure in his society." Yet Hamilton was not blind to all this. He felt, and rejoiced in his power. His was no petty vanity, which was to boast of himself, but the more subtle pride, which desired the acknowledgment of his influence, not by words of others, but by the subjugation of their wills to his.

He accounted very easily for his appearance. He had been visiting, ever since he left Clifton, a college friend who resided at the last station, and he had upon this day started for M——. He said that he considered himself very fortunate in being able to escort Miss Langdon.

Albert awaited his sister at the station, when, at length, the travellers reached their journey's end. The greeting between the brother and sister was beautiful in its sincerity and simplicity. When they were seated in the hack, and twenty questions had been asked and answered, the youth said :

"How changed that Mr. Hamilton is! There goes his carriage; it was waiting for him all this time. I remember when he would have offered its use to us!"

"How fine you have grown, Mr. Albert, to despise this very respectable conveyance, and sigh for private coaches!"

"No such thing, miss. Do not fancy, if that grand equipage had been proffered for our accommodation, it would have been accepted. I prefer to be under no obligations to 'summer friends.'"

"Do not be severe upon your neighbors, Albert; and

remember, my proud brother, that I am greatly indebted to Mr. Hamilton for his kind escort. Be assured, it was entirely voluntary. Ah, here we are at home, and my father and mother stand ready to embrace me!"

Joyful was her home that night. The parents and children were very happy in their entire reunion. The gayety of Constance and Albert was so infectious, that Mr. and Mrs. Langdon joined in the pleasant talk, and enjoyed the spicy account of her daily life in Clifton, and the festivities of Waverley. Then the piano was reopened, and their favorite songs were sung, and the daughter appeared so bright and cheerful, since her return, that even the fond mother forgot to ask if the traveller was not weary. It was quite late before the inquiry was made. Then the answer came :

"I think I am a little tired ; but it is so delightful to be with you all again, I had forgotten my journey. One more song, papa, please. It shall be, 'Home, sweet home.' We can all sing *con expressione*."

So are the good happy—not so much in things merely external, as in the heart's sunshine, and in the reflected radiance of that perfect Love, which illumines earth, and gilds with light the pathway to the home eternal !

CHAPTER XIII.

"My love she's but a lassie yet ;
My love she's but a lassie yet ;
We'll let her stand a year or twa ;
She'll no be half so saucy yet."

ROBERT BURNS.

WINTER had come ; the holidays were approaching. The good people of Clifton were dwellers in the great city, our modern Babel. Mona Harcourt was attempting two parties and a concert in one night. She had as many admirers as the Lady of Lyons, but by no means sighed for a Prince of Como. In truth, some of her acquaintance doubted if the little lady possessed a heart ; at least, a heart which might be considered the seat of the affections.

Young Fairfax had placed a diamond ring on the proper finger as a *gage d'amour*. But Mona said "that she detested public engagements," and asserted her entire liberty from all restraints of an exacting lover. Except that she called him by his Christian name when they were alone, and he was allowed to use the same freedom toward her, Lionel at times could scarcely realize that they were betrothed. And this was his dream of perfect felicity, to know that Mona was his

affianced bride—to believe her bound to him forever. Poor Lionel was very much in love; and although love is said to be blind to the faults of the adored one, in this case love was not blind to unhappiness. He felt that something was wrong, but could not find the remedy. If he reproached her for her indifference, Mona laughed, called him fanciful, then folded her little hands together, and said she was very penitent for her evil deeds, and then finished by asking him to execute some commission for her; thus sent him off, more enamored than before. Certain it was, the fairy bewitched him, for never did man submit to innumerable caprices as patiently as Lionel Fairfax. Away from Mona, he was sensible of her imperfections; but, in her presence, he forgot all but her loveliness. It was with a deeper sense than usual of her many coquettishnesses, he paid his morning visit to the house of Mr. Harcourt, one bright December day.

He waited in the drawing room half an hour before she made her appearance, and then she was arrayed in an elegant visiting toilette. Lionel's greeting was more cold than usual, but Mona was unobservant of his moods. "Do you not think my bonnet handsome?" she asked, almost immediately.

"Very pretty," was the cool reply.

"Faint praise! What is the matter, sir; is it unbecoming?"

He made no answer.

"How stupid you are to-day, Lionel! What has put you in the sulks? I was in a desperate hurry to go out; the carriage is already waiting, and yet I delayed, to see you. Now you must needs be in a bad humor!"

"If you are in haste, I have no desire to detain you."

"Very well," replied the young lady, with imperturbable coolness; "perhaps you will be so good as to attend me to the carriage." She rose, and walked to the door.

Lionel looked aghast. "Stop!" he cried. "You cannot mean to leave me thus! Have I come here, only to place you in your carriage, as your footman might? *Mona*, you are heartless; you treat me with contempt!"

"You said you had no desire to detain me; but if you wish to talk now, talk on. Only, I entreat, do not contrive a 'scene,' Lionel; these perpetual reproaches are wearisome." She walked to the mirror, and commenced adjusting her lace. That accomplished to her satisfaction, she said: "How did you enjoy yourself at *Mrs. Beverley's*, last night? Horrid, stupid place it is! but she contrives to have good music, and collects some good dancers."

"You seemed to find *Maxwell* anything but stupid!" remarked the young lover. "You seemed much entertained by his conversation!"

"Fie, fie, jealous man! Who told you so?"

"I have a right to be jealous. Last night you vouchsafed me three words, and allowed me to dance with you *once*. The flowers which I gave you, you left at home. A bouquet, presented by that dissipated man, you carried all the evening!"

"Oh, no! I did not; I gave it to you to hold, while I waltzed with *Robert Jonston*."

The amazing insolence of this speech fairly roused Lionel's anger. "Enough!" he said. "You insult the man to

whom you professed to give your heart! Your heart!" he repeated, with sarcastic bitterness, "your tender, *truthful* heart! Do you think—do you think I can endure this trifling forever? Pause—reflect, before you cast away a love so faithful and entire as mine."

Mona was a little frightened, yet she answered with calmness:

"You do not trust me. You do not bear with me. One hasty word of mine irritates you too surely. Your affection is not so entire as you declare."

He would have interrupted her, but she went on:

"You are exacting, Lionel. You would debar me from all society but yours. You desire every smile to be given to you, and you alone. You would bind me to you with chains which chafe and gall me. You compel me to be yours; you do not win my love. I cannot live in bondage, for I have been petted, caressed, and spoiled from infancy. I know I am vain, and full of faults. If you cannot bear with these, we must part."

Her tones were tremulous, and the slight emotion melted away every feeling of resentment from Lionel. Blind and weak in his great passion, he poured forth words of passionate tenderness, reproaching himself severely for his mistrust. The girl listened, flattered and softened, her conscience whispering how unjust had her accusation of her lover been. Then she placed her hand in his, saying:

"Dear Lionel, believe I do care for you; but I cannot give up everything now—I am so young and gay. But the

time may come when we may be all in all to each other, and give up flirtings and jealousies for evermore!"

Trifling as were these words, they transported the young lover; and when he had placed her in the carriage, he walked away, repeating to himself: "The time will come when we are all in all to each other;" while Mona threw herself back on the soft cushions of her luxurious coach, and sighed: "This cannot last. I am weary—so weary!"

CHAPTER XIV.

"I would fain know what kind of thing a man's heart is !
I will report it to you : 'Tis a thing framed
With divers corners."

ROWLEY.

THE wintry sun was shining brightly through the heavy curtains of the dining room in Mahdrof avenue. Miss Susan was watching the dining room clock. Bessie was pretending to rock her doll to sleep, to the tune of a Christmas carol ; but the doll was yet wide awake, for the little girl said : "Oh, dear ! auntie, she won't shut her eyes. Where is the wire ?"

"Spencer," said Miss Susan, "go up stairs, and see if Mr. Hamilton is coming down soon. It is after ten o'clock."

The man hesitated. "'Deed, Miss Mortimer, I hate to go up again. Mr. Hamilton is amazing angry if he is called so often. I just done gone up, ma'am."

"Go up, Bessie—that's a darling !—and call brother. He will not be angry with you. Tell him breakfast will be quite spoiled."

"I don't want to go, auntie ; I want to put dollie to sleep. I can't find the wire, so she won't shut her eyes."

"Give me dollie ; I will put her to sleep before you

get down stairs. Go, dear. Do you not like to please auntie?"

"Yes, ma'am;" and she enforced her assent with an embrace, but still she lingered. "Let me see her eyes go to, first, my sweet, darling aunt." The doll's lids fell down, and the child danced up stairs to her brother's door. "Get up!" she shouted; "breakfast is ready; it will be spoiled, if you don't come down this minute. Aunt Susan is dreadfully hungry. There's a whole heap of letters and papers waiting for you, and my doll fast asleep. Get up! get up!"

Her brother emerged from his room, and caught her in his arms. "How dare you make such a noise?" he said, kissing her.

"How dare you kiss me?" was the reply. "Now carry me down stairs, or else I will do something mighty naughty. Perhaps I will steal your muffins! Maybe I will!"

"Up to my shoulder, then, Queen Bess; and now we go down the steps, two at a time! Ah, Miss Susan, 'the top of the morning to your ladyship!'"

"You are very late, Edward; and you do not look well. What is the matter?"

"I was disturbed in my morning dreams by our neighbor, the ranter next door. I do aver that man prays so fervently at the time of his family devotions, I can hear him through the wall into my room!" Spencer was just bringing in the tray. "I say, Spencer," Mr. Hamilton continued, "take my compliments to Mr. Jones, and ask him if he will be so good as to pray less loudly to-morrow morning; he breaks my slumbers, and makes my head ache." The man

smiled. "Go along with you, Spencer; I am in earnest!"

The servant looked full of glee, and made for the door.

"Come back, Spencer," said Miss Susan. "Mr. Hamilton is only joking."

"Indeed, I am not," was the imperturbable reply.

"Oh, Edward!" exclaimed the good aunt, now fairly alarmed. "I do not mind your quizzing at the proper time, but do not send the boy with such a message. Mr. Jones will think you extremely rude!"

"Mr. Jones's opinion is of immense importance," said Hamilton, shrugging his shoulders. "You need not go, Spencer. Miss Susan likes the noise."

Miss Susan laughed. "Come to the table, then. I am almost starved!"

"What! have you waited for me?" said the young man.

"Certainly. I took a cup of coffee, when Bessie had her breakfast; but I could not bear to have you eat a solitary meal, so preferred to wait. Do not look so grave, Edward; it was a pleasant choice."

"I said, last week, I did not like you to wait."

"And I am to infer that you do not wish me to pour out your coffee, sir," was the smiling rejoinder.

"I do not wish you to starve yourself, and make yourself uncomfortable, because I choose to come down stairs at half past ten o'clock. It annoys me to think I have disturbed your regular routine."

It displeased Hamilton to know that he might have occa-

sioned her any discomfort or vexation. He remembered her bump of order, and thought he was performing a very creditable deed, in desiring her no longer to await his tardy arrival, before partaking of her morning repast. It never occurred to him that her bump of order would have been more gratified by his earlier rising, and the routine of the whole household become more regular, and the home circle brightened.

"You are beginning to keep late hours, night and morning," said the lady, so gently he could not take offence.

"I am becoming a sad fellow generally. Do not scold, Aunt Susan; it is of no use."

Aunt Susan was silent. Hamilton read the morning paper, as he made a show of eating breakfast. He did not take up his letters and depart for the study, but stopped Miss Mortimer, as she was about disappearing, on "household cares intent."

"Whither bound, lady—to the storeroom? Forget storerooms; I want to talk to you."

She sat down near him, and looked with tender eyes on the brother and sister she so truly loved. Bessie had climbed to Hamilton's knee, and her pretty brown curls rested on his shoulder, while her little hands played with his hair. They were very unlike—the child so fair, the man so dark; the features of the girl so infantine and sunny, while Hamilton's countenance looked pale and worn. Miss Susan thought him altered in appearance, and she said so.

"All fancy, I assure you. I was never better in my life. But I do not like to see a cloud on your face, my dear

madam, and think I brought it there. Are you angry with me because I was so dilatory?"

"I am never angry with you, Edward; but I am anxious. You are changed; I see it. What is it? Are you not happy?"

He threw his head back, and began to laugh.

"I beg your pardon, I cannot help it. This is too amusing! I rose one hour later than usual, this morning, and you think I am not happy! Who can account for the imaginations of women!"

The lady was vexed. She did not feel in the mood for trifling. "You have not looked over your letters," she said.

"What do I care for letters, when I have you with whom to converse? Letters are from outsiders; with you and Bessie is my home. Letters are often stupid; you never are!" He was laughing still.

"You will be late at your office, Edward."

"My dear Miss Susan, it is apparent to me that you wish to get rid of me on short notice to-day. You have been hinting to me it was time for me to go, for half an hour. Pride whispers, to take myself off directly; but self-indulgence whispers, that my office and law books are not so attractive as my aunt and sister."

She passed her hand caressingly over his forehead. "You do not care for your profession as you did," she persisted, with a woman's unmindfulness of all but her present anxiety.

"I do not," he replied, rousing himself to a less careless manner. "I shall give it up entirely."

She looked aghast. "What will you do?"

"I do not know; I have not determined. I am tired of the dry work I have pursued for the past four years. Perhaps I shall go abroad. I must have change. I must have change," he repeated, abstractedly.

"What has become of your ambitious projects, and schemes for fame and renown?"

"All fled," he answered, half sorrowfully. "My father's fame and riches are my inheritance. I have enough. Ambition is dead within my breast. In you, and in this dear child, 'all my hopes fold their wings.'"

The beautiful quotation was very apt, and touched Miss Susan's heart. "Do not leave us, then," she said, greatly moved. "Oh! my dear Edward, my child in love and kindness, stay with us. Do not leave us!"

"Do not fear," he replied, his rich voice faltering. "To you, and to my only sister, I am bound by ties I would not, if I could, sever. Rest in the assurance of my unalterable love."

And Bessie drew her aunt's hand, and held it, with both hers, upon her brother's. "Do not cry, auntie dear; brother shall not go away. We will always live together, and be so very, very happy." Then, with an embrace for each, she broke away, to sing blithely her new Christmas song.

CHAPTER XV.

“‘And I remember the chief,’ said the king of woody Morven ; ‘I met him, one day, on the hill ; his cheek was pale ; his eye was dark ; the sigh was frequent in his breast ; his steps were toward the desert.’”

CARRIE-THURA.

If on Miss Mortimer’s heart there rested the shadow of a coming sorrow, she held her peace. Weeks had elapsed, and the Festival of the Nativity had passed. Christmas greetings had been exchanged. Young hearts had been gladdened. The feast had been celebrated ; but Christmastide was not all over, for festivals were yet held for those young children who assembled from their homes of want and poverty to partake of the good things provided for them by those whom God had blessed with ability and willingness, and who thus found opportunity to feed the hungry and gladden the sorrowful. Bessie Hamilton had heard, through her aunt and Constance, of the poor boys and girls belonging to the mission schools of St. Thomas’s chapel, and had contributed, to the adornment of “the tree,” two dozen crying dolls, the proceeds of the contents of a savings box. She had been present when the toys were distributed, and was happy in witnessing the delight of the children, and watching her

dear Miss Langdon, and Miss Stanley, engaged in their labors of love, and amused by Dr. Caxton, who was unaccountably neglecting his professional duties, to pay a visit to M—— at this season, and was now rendering Mr. Ambrose, the good and indefatigable rector, some assistance.

When Bessie reached home, her head was still filled with the pleasures of the day. Her brother received a full account. He listened to the little girl for some time, as she prattled on, ever appealing to her aunt for confirmation of her words, or to refresh her memory, till he said :

“ Little maid, your tongue runs fast; you are proving yourself a true woman by your loquacity ! ”

“ What does loquacity mean, brother ? Oh ! no matter ; don’t tell me now ! I have not half told you everything, and how Mr. Ambrose thanked me, just as if I were Aunt Susan, for sending the two dozen crying doll babies. And he is so funny, too, and said such funny things, just like you ; and all the children loved him, for he is just as good as *anybody !* ”

“ So you are learning to sing a song of praise in honor of St. Ambrose, Miss Bessie ! ” laughed the brother. But the child did not comprehend the covert sneer, and went on chatting merrily and fast. Once or twice the name of Dr. Caxton was mentioned, and Hamilton at length said :

“ What Dr. Caxton is that, Miss Susan ? ”

“ Oh ! the one from Clifton,” was the reply. “ I heard he was engaged to Constance Langdon, but I did not think it could be. He is very attentive, however, and she seemed perfectly easy in his society. He is a very nice person.

Not precisely the sort of man I should fancy she would have liked; but he is a devout churchman, I believe, and intelligent; and no one can choose for others!" Miss Susan really sighed. "Do you know," she added, with evident shyness, "I chose you, Edward, for her? and, when the world were gossiping about you two, last winter, I held my tongue, and hoped the gossip might be true?"

"I assure you, madam," answered Hamilton, with more sarcastic bitterness of tone than the lady's light words seemed to justify, "I am duly sensible of the honor done to me by linking my name with Miss Langdon's. You should have remembered that I never sing psalms or attend prayer meetings, and that I am not, like the worthy Doctor, 'a devout churchman.' Could our tastes assimilate?"

"Don't you say your prayers, brother?" cried Bessie, catching at one word in the sentence just uttered. Her brother pushed her, but not ungently, from his side. "You do," she continued; "I know you do. Auntie, make him say he does. He is not wicked. *He* can't be wicked!"

Hamilton rose, and walked down stairs. But Miss Susan noticed, at tea, that there was a sort of mournful tenderness in his manner toward the child.

"Will you stay at home this evening, Edward?" said the good lady. "It is a long time since you have spent an evening alone with me. Unless a visitor is here, you always take yourself away."

"I have so many engagements," he replied. "Do you not see me, every day, long enough to grow tired of me?"

There was only a shadow of his former gayety in his

tone, and Miss Susan did not like to persist, so said no more. Before the meal was over, Bessie was fretted by some trifling matter, and, tired and sleepy, she evidenced her vexation. An angry scene ensued. The aunt soothed and coaxed in vain; the brother exerted a shadow of authority, but all was useless, and she went to the nursery, enlivening the house with her angry screams.

"Let her alone!" cried Hamilton, with a laugh, to Miss Susan. "She will cry herself to sleep, and awake as amiable as ever. You cannot make a good Christian of her; she is too like her *sinful* brother. As she becomes older, she will outgrow these freaks of temper, and do very well."

The half-contemptuous tone hurt Miss Mortimer, but she said nothing, and withdrew.

Edward was entering the nursery, an hour afterward, to say "good night" to his sister, when he paused on the threshold, for Bessie was repeating her evening prayers. She was kneeling by her aunt's side, and he heard distinctly the simple words. She made especial mention of her naughtiness that night, and then the little penitent paused; and then came a new petition: "If my brother does not say his prayers, please to make him to be good, and to say them, for the Holy Jesus' sake."

"It was not wrong to say that more, auntie?" said Bessie, as she kissed her "good night;" "for Miss Constance told me I might ask God for everything for brother, as for myself, and He *would* hear me."

Hamilton came forward, and kissed the child with his

accustomed fondness. No one observed that he had been in the room before but the nurse, and to her a sign was made for silence. Bessie clung closely to him, and breathed in his ear, very softly, how naughty she had been, and how sorry. Again he embraced her, and said "good night."

"Auntie," said Bessie, when he was gone, "do men ever cry?"

"Why, darling?"

"Because something wet my cheek just now, when brother kissed me, and I thought maybe it was a tear!"

Poor Miss Susan! her sorrowful heart was filled with hopes. The rapid change in Hamilton, of late, was quite forgotten, and she went joyfully down stairs to the library. She ordered the gas lighted, the dropshade placed, put out her work basket, and made Spencer draw up Hamilton's easy chair. An hour she waited quite alone—then the expected one entered. The gloomy shadow was deepened on his face, as he remarked her innocent preparations for an evening at home.

"Sorry to disappoint you, *ma tante*, but I am obliged to go out. Where is that Spencer?" He rang the bell violently. "Do not fret," he added, approaching Miss Susan. "I am not deserving it; but look up, gentle lady, and give me one smile."

The gentle lady bent her head lower over her work. "I do not mean to be selfish, but, womanlike, I miss a little the society of my dear Edward."

He bent tenderly over her chair, and made her raise her head, while he said some one of the gay and loving words of

old. She was startled to perceive how flushed and excited he was with wine. At this moment Spencer entered, to announce a gentleman in the parlor, and handed Hamilton a card. His dark eyes seemed to emit fire, as he read the name, "Gilbert Caxton, M. D."

"I am going out," he said; "I will see no one."

"But, my dear Edward," said Miss Susan, as she took up the card he had thrown down, "stop one moment, to make apologies to him. He is a stranger in M——, and a friend of our friends the Langdons. Surely you will, for this, pay him some respect!"

"I am going out," he repeated.

"But, at least, send some civil message, by Spencer, of regret."

The servant waited. "What is it to me," exclaimed Hamilton, with a muttered oath, "what message he takes? Let him make his own! Bring me a light for my cigar, Spencer!"

The command having been fulfilled, Hamilton took his departure. As the hall door closed after him, Miss Susan made her appearance in the parlor, and very politely gave excuses for Mr. Hamilton's inability to enjoy the society of Dr. Caxton that evening. Dr. Caxton expressed his regret, but spent some time agreeably with the lady, leaving with her a business letter from Clifton, of which he had been the bearer. When he saw Constance afterward, he remarked "that Miss Mortimer was an agreeable lady, but very quiet."

CHAPTER XVI.

“ To die—to sleep—
No more ; and, by a sleep, to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to ; 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die—to sleep ;
To sleep ! perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub ;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause.”

HAMLET.

HAMILTON, when he had left his house, wandered on forgetful of his engagements, or any plans he might have formed for the whiling away of time that evening. Various emotions filled his heart—bitter jealousy, hatred of Caxton, weariness of life, loneliness, recollections of blighted hopes, of lost affections, of love thrown away, of wasted time and talents ; and, pervading all, resist it as he would, some tenderness excited by the hearing of Bessie's childlike prayer for him, and the strange comfort which the child had seemed to derive from her last petition. “ Was prayer indeed a law imposed on man, like gravitation upon matter ? ” Constance had bid her pray for him. Constance, so virtuous, so lovely and beloved, was she, then, right ? Might it be that

there was truth in the faith which she professed—which influenced her life? Could he, learned in the world's wisdom, a thorough scholar, be wrong?" The doubts which such thoughts roused perplexed him. He threw them all aside, as he considered that, though he would not have her other than she was, yet for him there could be no superstition. Constance might find consolation in the teachings of her creed; but he, with a man's thoughts, desires, and intellect, must rise superior to the fables and traditions by which man had been deceived, and the falsehoods and follies of priestcraft.

It was in such a mood he spent some hours with men like himself, reasoning against the existence of a God, and calling themselves wise while they turned from the Source of all wisdom. Here Hamilton was in his element; here he showed himself the profound student; here he was proudly conscious of his intellectual attainment; here he enjoyed intercourse with kindred minds, forgetting, for the time, his weariness, his regrets, his longing, and his despair. Captain Tracy joined him quite late in the evening, and then Hamilton proposed leaving immediately, and took his friend away.

"'Pon my honor," cried the lively officer, "you are too imperative! Why not have remained a little longer, and allowed me to enjoy your feast of reason?"

"Our feast of *reason*! It will be a sorry feast to you. Keep away from us. There is some heart left in you; you have some innocent superstition or faith—call it as you may—remaining. You would lose all with us, and gain—" He checked himself abruptly.

"If I am better than you," rejoined the other, laughing, yet surprised, "why do you not shun this place, and imitate my simplicity?"

Hamilton smiled. "I have a natural distaste for catechisms of all sorts, my dear Tracy, and never answer comprehensive questions."

It was almost midnight when Mr. Langdon, who had been detained out upon business, passed a club house. There were several persons collected about the steps, for there had evidently been a disturbance. Two gentlemen came out at the moment, and he thought he recognized the taller of the two. "But could that man," he thought, "disordered in dress, and his face flushed with drinking, be the irreproachable Edward Hamilton, to whom his daughter had once been betrothed!" They brushed past him quickly, and he overheard the one say:

"What folly! what madness! You might have killed him. For an instant I thought him dead! Yet he was not worth a blow!"

The answer was inaudible. Mr. Langdon's interest was excited; he determined to learn if his suspicions were correct. He crossed the street, and walked down on the other side; he recrossed, and walked up; thus he came face to face with the two men. The taller was Hamilton. He bowed, but in evident embarrassment, as he perceived the pitying, almost reproachful face of the father of Constance.

"I accept all the consequences of my act," said Edward, when the friends had continued their walk for some minutes in silence. "I do not regret that which I have done. That

Maxwell is a fiend incarnate. Do you think I am even yet so lost to every noble emotion, that I can hear him, of all men, mention, at such a time, in such a scene, the name of the purest of women!"

The Captain fixed his keen eyes upon him, as he answered :

"She is so far above him—above us—that such mention could not mar her purity."

Hamilton turned toward him angrily. He was displeased with himself, and almost jealous of Tracy's praise. "You presume too far on my forbearance, sir, when you dictate to me what I should do or leave undone—" He could not continue; Tracy's smile disarmed him. "Forgive me!" he added, his generous nature speaking now. "I have been almost maddened to-night. I am not responsible for word or deed. I am no longer worthy of a friendship as true as yours."

The soldier clasped his hand. "Bah! you are easily pardoned. But we must part now, and part as friends. You will need one soon; remember, I am he."

Hamilton did not reply; and Tracy, as he said "good night," observed with concern his countenance. "By Jove!" he cried, bluntly, "you are sadly changed; you are running down hill faster than any man I ever knew! My poor fellow, this is terrible. Why is this? Why do you not become once more an example of moderation and temperance? Blot out the last few months, and turn over a new, unspotted leaf."

A recollection of Mr. Langdon's face, that night, flashed

across the mind of Hamilton. His expression of sorrow and of disappointment had been almost like his daughter's. "He will tell her," he thought, with renewed bitterness, "and she will fall upon her knees, and sing *Te Deums* for her escape from me." "I cannot turn over a new leaf, my dear Tracy," he said aloud; "it is too late; *the book is—out!*"

And thus they parted. Edward reached his own room, and, seating himself, buried his face in his hands. His brain was bewildered, and it was almost vainly he strove to recall all which had occurred since he left his own house. A supper at the club, that he remembered, and Maxwell's face and toast of Constance Langdon, and his own fierce opposition; then Maxwell's malicious scowl, and scornful repetition of his pledge; then a blow which had felled the scorner, and had sobered Hamilton, for he saw the man lying like one dead at his feet; the confusion which ensued, and Tracy's hurrying him away; then meeting *her* father. He rose, and walked to the mirror. His wild, haggard face startled him. "Oh, Constance! once mine, but lost to me forever, would you grieve to see me now—now, when I so truly merit your contempt?"

Once more he threw himself into his chair, and his meditations grew more remorseful. He had thrown away talents, education, influence—and for what? To gain the pity of those who had loved him, and the triumphant sneers of those who had envied. His memory recalled years past—his happy, careless boyhood; his father's sympathy and affection; his early manhood, its bitter grief and losses; and the brief period when he rejoiced in the sunshine of Constance's

love, and forgot every storm which had darkened his sky ; then their separation, and its cause. Again the tormenting doubts, which ever assailed him when alone, gathered about him. Exhausted by his own passions, he could not combat them ; his mind was weakened, his reason, in which he had so lately gloried, useless. The examinations and researches which had discovered "mysteries" in Christianity, discovered also absurdities and difficulties in infidelity.

"Never," he thought, "was man so enveloped in darkness as I, and yet I am always groping. Why can I never rest ? Must my mind forever wander in this labyrinth ? This very night I could reason with others, could prove fallacies, could be free of superstition ; now, in solitude, with none to combat but myself, thoughts, fancies, longings haunt me. Will they never cease but with my breath ?" Again his thoughts travelled on, and on, and on, until he longed to solve the problem, and discover Truth and Error by one wild, mad experiment. Yet, godless and creedless, he feared himself ; and, with an effort, he threw off the dread temptation, and, seizing a book, strove to read. At first his attention wandered ; by degrees it became more fixed. He grew composed, and continued his reading, until the volume fell from his hand, and he slept, but slept to dream.

The joys which fled from him by day, blessed him by night ; for, when he seemed to be in scenes of tumult, warring with fiends, fighting against legions of demons, of a sudden all had changed, and the pure loveliness of Constance beamed upon him. But when he stretched forth his arms to clasp her to his heart—he woke, to find the morning sun

streaming through the unclosed blinds, and Miss Susan kneeling beside his chair, her tear-stained face toward him.

"We did not hear you come in, last night," she said, "and I entered your room to find you sleeping thus. Edward, what rest is this?"

"Rest—great rest!" he answered. "Such blissful dreams as mine have been! May my eternal sleep be blessed with dreams as beautiful as these!"

Miss Susan hid her weeping face upon his shoulder. At the words "eternal sleep," her cup of bitterness overflowed. He pressed her to his heart; his voice gained a new sadness, as he spoke:

"You cannot despise me as I despise myself. I am not worthy of these tears. I must never see you weep for me again." She looked up, alarmed. He continued, gently: "You must go to Clifton, and take Bessie with you, leaving me to my fate. I am growing used to separations, and can survive one more farewell. All the better, nobler feelings of my heart are crushed. My life is consumed by regrets. I seek forgetfulness, and I find it. There is a spell upon me which I cannot resist. I am sinking lower every day. I am not fit for your companionship, dear aunt, my more than mother! I must part from you, and my child-angel!"

"Edward! Edward!" Her deep sorrow prevented more words, but the reproach, the pleading which those conveyed!

"I make no excuses," he went on; "I offer no extenuation. I only know that I am weary and unhappy, beyond your ken and beyond your cure. For your forbearance, ten-

der ministrations, and love, I am not ungrateful. Earth cannot be a wilderness even to me, while I am blessed with your and Bessie's pure, unselfish love. Our separation will be robbed of half its sting, while I can feel that that love yet lives for me. Do not mistake me. I do not question its fidelity; I never have; but I am sensible of my own unworthiness."

"Edward!"—again the pleading and reproach—"it is unnatural to speak of separation! If you are miserable, we must be with you. How wretched would we be from you, and how could you live without us?"

He smiled, and his smile was more mournful than his gravity. "I shall live. Men do not die of misery. Sorrow is long lived; it lives to torture. I am godless and creedless; I am hopeless and aimless. I can no longer bring you anything but trouble and disgrace. We must part!" He put away the arms which would have embraced him, though not ungently, and rose from his chair as if to end all argument. But Miss Susan would not let him go. Generally a woman of few words, he had never known her so earnest as now.

"We will not leave you, Edward. The more wretched you are—and some grief you must have of which I do not know—the more you need our presence, our loving care, our tenderness, to make your burdens lighter, or, at least, to let some little ray of sunshine enter into your gloom."

"And you would stay with me when all the world will point to me with scorn? when I, who have once been courted and flattered, will meet with derision, contempt, or, worse than all, cursed pity? No—go! Let me not be un-

generous. Do not tempt me to add meanness to all my other vices. Believe that you are the dearer for your faithfulness, when all others have forsaken me. Let me prove myself worthy, by preventing your sacrifice. I can brave all *alone*. I can laugh at sneers, I can despise compassion, but I cannot drag you and my innocent sister down with me!"

She went to him now, and made him sit beside her. She was very calm, but her face was pale, and he noticed that her hair had become more gray of late, and she looked older by some years, and her brow was not so placid, but more care-worn. He remarked upon this change, and added that it was his work.

"Say, rather, the work of years," she replied. "Ah, we have been companions for years. Tell me, have we not been very happy together?" He assented heartily. "You and Bessie are my chief earthly ties. I should be a lonely old woman without you; and will you rob me now?"

"You shall have Bessie still;" but his tone was more relenting.

"You judge us ill, Edward, when you think that for our happiness we must part. We are happier with you in adversity, than separated from you, knowing you were suffering. We will stay. No, do not deny it—we *will* stay. Our love shall be the one plant ever blooming for you, and it shall bear such flowers of sympathy, of comfort, of tender care, that you shall live to bless the day when you learned our truth, our constancy, and their power. Dearest Edward, you cannot refuse me!"

He did not answer for one moment—he could not; then he said :

“I have cast away much; I cannot cast away this love. I accept your sacrifice.”

The words were cold, but Miss Mortimer did not cavil over the expression, for his tone spoke volumes of gratitude.

“Edward, you have made me happy. Ah, do you know, that though you say that you are hopeless, I have hope for you—a hope so sure, that I am almost patient amid the darkness of the present?”

“Aunt Susan, I believe that you are happier in your superstition, than I in my unbelief; yet I cannot be false to my reason, my mind, my knowledge, and the education of years.” He stooped down, and kissed her forehead. “But you and the dear child shall stay with me. Nothing shall divide us now!” •

CHAPTER XVII.

“Doubtless the pleasure is as great
Of being cheated, as to cheat.”

BUTLER'S *HUDIBRAS*.

“MONA,” said Mrs. Harcourt, “why do you allow Mr. Maxwell to pay you such marked attention? It is not right toward Lionel; and besides, my child, you will gain a reputation for flirting, if you allow so many danglers.”

“Heigh-ho!” said Mona, pretending to sigh; “I am an unhappy girl. I cannot have a man visit me three times, without being accused of trifling with him! Mamma, do not sermonize, please—that's a darling; wait until Sunday.”

Her mother laughed. “Oh, fairy! you are incorrigible. We will get Lionel to use his influence to keep you in order. When once you are fairly tied, my love, you will give up your flightiness and whims perforce.”

Mona tossed her head, pouted, then kissed her mother fondly, caressed her like a petted child, and left the apartment. Ten minutes later, Mr. Maxwell was announced to Miss Harcourt, as that lady was seated in the drawing room.

The gentleman was of the medium height, and Mona felt the fascination of his presence, as she could not but be sen-

sible of the graces of his handsome person. His voice was always smooth and unmodulated, like that of a plausible man, and he approached the young lady's sofa with a certain well-assured air, and took a place by her side.

Mona was usually very vivacious, but she chose now to assume an indifferent manner. She did not give him her hand, but scarcely looked toward him, as he paid his compliments, which she acknowledged with an inclination of her head; and, when he had concluded, she turned toward him, saying carelessly :

“ How d'ye do ? Cold day, is it not ? ”

“ Is it possible,” he answered, ironically, “ I could be sensible of anything unpleasant while in your society ? There is no winter for me, when I am near you—only a perpetual spring and summer of delight ! When with you, the sun seems ever to be shining ! Roses and lilies bloom alway on your charming face ; violets are seen in your blue eyes—— ”

“ Very fulsome flattery, sir,” interrupted Mona, “ and most commonplace ! The last time you saw me, you told me of stars in my eyes ! ”

“ You will understand, I began my speech with the sun this time, which necessitated that the simile of day should be carried out, so I omitted stars. But I am pleased you remembered. It is an assurance that my compliments are treasured by Miss Harcourt. What an honor for me ! ”

She was piqued, but did not please him by manifesting her annoyance. “ Certainly, I remember and treasure *all* your sayings. Can you doubt it ? ” Her pretty lips were unmistakably curled, but Mr. Maxwell was indifferent to her scorn.

"Do you go to Mrs. Melville's this evening, Miss Harcourt?"

"Possibly I may look in, quite late. I go to a concert first."

"May I ask who is honored by being your escort?"

"You may, Mr. Maxwell. Yet gentlemen never ask questions of ladies!"

"They are, however, permitted to make addresses!"

The wit was stale, yet Mona laughed—not a fine lady laugh, but simply and naturally. "We are talking great nonsense!"

"I am very sorry. What shall I talk about, Miss Mona? Shall I discuss the last essay on the Power of Thought, or enliven you with a disquisition on gravestones? or shall I adapt my conversation to a truly feminine style, and criticize Miss B's, Miss C's, and Mrs. D's elegant costumes last evening?"

"No; I can form very proper ideas of dress without hints from another. As for disquisitions and essays, they are dull and stupid, and remind me of a certain gentleman who honors me with some learned talk frequently."

"Ah, I know!" said Mr. Maxwell. "It is the slim Egerton; a scholar, *un pédon hérissé de Grec et de Latin.*"

"Some one said you were a judge of character, Mr. Maxwell. Tell mine."

"You would be angry, if I did!"

"No, no; I promise not. Proceed!"

He looked at her one moment, as though hesitating—then spoke:

"You are pretty, young lady——"

"Pshaw! that is not character. I do not desire a catalogue of my charms."

"Pardon me. Your pretty face has an essential influence on your character. If Miss Harcourt were plain, Miss Harcourt would not be the same person. You are vain. You desire to have every one admire and worship and flatter you, not in words, but by adoration. You are selfish, for you care nothing for the misery of others, so that your heart's desire for admiration be granted. You have sufficient wit to make you charming to all men, and you take good care they shall never think you esteem yourself more wise than they. This scheming grows out of your desire for power; therefore you are not truly sincere. Your kindly emotions are easily excited, but very fleeting. You are never in a passion—if you have nothing to cross you. You are now your own mistress, but such you will not always be."

He paused, and Mona found voice to speak, although tears of vexation stood in her eyes:

"How dare you address such words to me, sir? No one ever spoke so before. If this is your opinion of me, our friendship is at an end."

He laughed a low, musical laugh. "Had it ever begun? I knew you would be angry, although you promised you would not. How often do you break your promises, Miss Harcourt? I see young Fairfax mounting the steps. Good morning." He stopped before her, and added, in a low, earnest voice: "Am I forgiven, because I fulfilled your command? The

virtues are not yet named. May I come again, and enumerate them?"

"No, sir!"

"Then I am not forgiven, Miss Mona! You are really vexed. Tell me, before that man shall *order* you not to trust my friendship, that you believe me sincere, at least. What matters it that I am sensible of your foibles, if I cannot break the chain which binds me to you forever?" There was the sound of Lionel's step in the hall. "I am forgiven; by your face I see it. But you fear to say we shall, at least, be friends, lest you should risk your lover's displeasure. I was wrong; you are *not* your own mistress, even now!"

Mona raised her head proudly. "I am under no one's thraldom, and I believe you true. We are friends!"

He took her hand, and raised it to his lips, and Lionel stood within the drawing-room door. Mr. Maxwell smiled a cheerful "good morning" to the newcomer, and took his leave.

"What does this mean?" said the lover, rather abruptly.

"If '*this*' has reference to Mr. Maxwell's devout kissing of my hand, I answer, Nothing. You have done the same." She laughed.

"I!" he replied, flushing high. "I! Do you rank *him* with *me*? Do you make no difference between us?"

"Nonsense! Don't be vexed. Are you not always first to me? Dear Lionel, do you, at least, judge me kindly and leniently?"

During the time they were together, she was gentle and kind, and her treatment was so tender, that Fairfax could almost fancy she thought that she had done him wrong, and was penitent, or that, for some reason, she pitied him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Happiness dwells in the temples of home."

MAHDROF AVENUE, in the city of M—, is crossed toward the upper part by the quiet Belmont street, and at house No. 40 lived the Langdon family. The winter, for them, was passing quietly. The regular routine of every day was not disturbed. The daily anxieties, the daily cares, the daily sorrows were shared by each, and the burden thereby lightened; and the joys and hopes and pleasures of each member of the home circle communicated to the others, and all rejoiced in each other's rejoicing. Thus Constance would often say, "Our happiness is *fourfold*." They believed, also, and acted upon their belief, in demonstration of affection. Those who live amid excitement, gayety, and abundance, cannot know, cannot appreciate those simple things which give happiness. As one grows older, as one lives remote from action, or is debarred from those luxuries and those means which give external quiet and apparent freedom from care, one feels daily what power the manifestation of affection in words possesses; how *words* of love, alone, comfort and

bless ; the bitter heartaches this demonstration heals, the consolation it bestows. It was love alone which made the Langdons' house tranquil and peaceful—made care and disappointment endurable ; and the earthly love helped them to understand the Love eternal. Thus the Langdons were happy, not only apparently, but really—happier in word and look, and in heart, than many who lived in wealth and at ease.

Mrs. Langdon and her daughter were seated in the parlor, one wintry morning. The sun, shining brightly through the window, made the room the more cheerful for its genial light. The elder lady was sewing, and the younger cutting out some little aprons and dresses for poor children.

“Mamma,” said Constance, “if our purses are not heavy, it has occurred to me we are doing something for the Church now. Do you agree ?”

“Yes,” was the answer ; “if we only keep the right motive ever in mind, and are single hearted. The little we can do is very pleasant, and I am thankful we can accomplish anything.”

Constance went on with her work, sometimes talking brightly of the future, or planning for home comforts with her mother, and ever interested in home duties. The mother’s gentle face looked with love on the child, so cheerful, so unselfish, and so useful ; and her heart rose in thankfulness for the darling daughter, the charm, the light of the household. Her eyes watched the graceful movements of Constance, as she folded away her work, arranged the disordered table cover, tidied her work basket, picked up odd

bits of calico and muslin which had fallen on the carpet, and at last opened the piano, and threw some music on the stand, declaring closed instruments looked so unsociable. Then she stood at the door, contemplating her arrangements with satisfaction.

"I think, mamma, the room is charming. Aunt Harcourt's drawing rooms cannot compare. Everything there looks grand and fine, and ours is elegant comfort. I do maintain it is elegant, though plain. It looks like a gentleman's house, at least! Ah, that Dr. Caxton is a jewel of a man—as Mona would say—to keep us supplied with flowers. This last bouquet is superb;" and she stooped over the flowers to inhale their fragrance.

Mrs. Langdon smiled. "Yes, 'keeps *us* supplied!'—perhaps for your sake, Constance!"

The younger lady blushed. "I am sure you receive the benefit, and are supplied with pleasure. Oh, mamma! I am forgetting all about preparing a dessert which shall be acceptable to my good father. Good-by, flowers!"

The dinner-table chat was very pleasant that day, and the family assembled around the dining-room fire, when the day was declining, and all was peace and love. The favorite authors of each one were discussed. A spice of argument enlivened the conversation, earnest, but not excited. The father imparted of his wisdom to his children, and the mother encouraged them to listen to his teachings. She upheld him in all. She never put herself forward—her husband was ever first; and Constance and Albert ceased their own fanciful talk, to listen to his reasoning, his counsel,

or his wit ; and he put aside his cares, and joined in turn with them. Thus all was unity ; and in that twilight hour, no thought arose of sorrow, nor anxious cares, nor gloomy prospects. They cast their care on Him to whom, in “ everything, they gave thanks.”

CHAPTER XIX.

“Thou sayest I am a wretch,
And thou sayest true.
I am a wretch, and proud of wretchedness ;
'Tis the sole earthly thing that cleaves to me.”

MATURIN'S BERTRAM.

MRS. DANFORTH's rooms were brilliantly lighted, and filled with gay company. The *élite* of M—— were gathered there. The mistress of the house moved amid her guests, setting every one at ease, grouping together those whose tastes assimilated, and separating those who were opposed. There were recesses, small rooms, and conservatories, for sentimental converse or “desperate flirtations.” There was a library thrown open to the more thoughtful and grave, and curiosities and works of art on every side. Every one said Mrs. Danforth “entertained finely,” and every one was right. Her suppers were most sumptuous and elegant; her dances most properly managed; the musicians the first in the city; and her guests always selected with care and discretion. On this occasion there was none of that stiffness which makes one long so earnestly for “broken ice.” Here and there might be seen two or three men of learning or distinction

talking together, or some author of genius courted by an admiring throng. There a gay belle enchaining a knot of beaux to her side, or some less coquettish maiden chatting brightly to her one or two adorers.

Constance was emerging from the dancing room, escorted by a Mr. Gifford, when she encountered Mary Stanley on Dr. Caxton's arm. Mr. Gifford was a stranger in M——. He had been abroad, and was now in the United States for the first time in several years. He wore glasses, was short and slight, and something of a humorist; but "little Mr. Gifford" could never be insignificant, for he was withal a well read and well-informed man, of fine parts, but great modesty.

"We are *en route* for the dancing room," said Mary. "Are you weary of proving yourself a follower of Terpsichore, Constance?"

"Not *in* the least. But Mr. Gifford is to allow me a promenade by way of variety, or rather interlude, while I bestow on him a dish of gossip. He is such a stranger here, I mean to point out the notables to him."

Mr. Gifford smiled, and, discoursing pleasantly, they continued their promenade. "Who is that new arrival?" he inquired. "What a grand stature and manly frame—the embodiment of strength! He arrives late."

"That is Mr. Edward Hamilton."

"The son of Oswald Hamilton? Then I must be presented by Mr. Danforth, before the evening is over. Some of my friends abroad, who have visited the United States, spoke of him in high terms, as a man of ability and acquire-

ments, a true gentleman, a brilliant conversationist; in fine, a sort of 'Admirable Crichton.' You know him, of course, and can tell me if this report be true?"

"He is an accomplished man, and well esteemed here. I see Mrs. Gourlay, who is matronizing me this evening. If you take me to her, you can immediately seek Mr. Danforth, and secure your introduction. Mr. Hamilton never remains late."

"Do you think his acquaintance can make amends for the loss of Miss Langdon's society?"

Miss Langdon smiled. She could read in her companion's face, despite his well-meant gallantry, his anxiety for the presentation, so she insisted that Mr. Gifford should follow her advice.

Thus she soon perceived the new acquaintances conversing with animation, and evident interest. Soon others joined the two, and she observed the influence which Mr. Hamilton exercised over them. As his lofty head towered above other men, she could mark the changes of his face from gravity to a smile. The smiles were rare, but the expression ever varied. Sometimes he listened politely to another, sometimes deferentially; sometimes he appeared absent, or his brow clouded; again his whole countenance would lighten, as he spoke with earnestness or force. All this time her chaperon, and one of those party-going bachelors so aptly termed "ever bloomers," kept up a continual chatter. Constance had been pretending to perform her share in the conversation, but at length she was fairly roused, as the "ever bloomer" moved away, by Mrs. Gourlay's words:

"Do you know, Constance, why Mr. Hamilton has given up his profession?" Then, without waiting for an answer: "Some of these solemn old men say it is dreadful, and declare it is very foolish for him to throw away fame and ambition, and all that! What nonsense! If I had such a fine fortune as he, I would do nothing but enjoy it. However, I am truly sorry to learn that he is not so circumspect in his deportment as we used to think. You ought to have taken him in hand; such a good soul as you might have done him a mighty deal of good, and saved him from much evil! Poor fellow!"

"I do not believe that he is changed! I will not!" said Constance, speaking more earnestly than she was aware.

"That is because you do not want to believe, my dear! No matter; he will be no worse than other men; and I reckon you can bring him all right, if you make the attempt! Do you not agree with me, Mrs. Darcy?"

Mrs. Darcy was an envious, jealous woman, and, at this time, particularly perturbed because her daughters were not proving very attractive, and because Mrs. Gourlay was full of joyousness, and had been extolling her beautiful friend's virtues and charms. She therefore said:

"It is reported, on good authority, that Mr. Hamilton is becoming just like other young men; that he is altered enough in six months, and was obliged to give up his profession because he had no chance to gain eminence. People," added Mrs. Darcy, significantly, "do not like to have to do with a man who is always giving wine parties, or frequenting them. Besides——" But Constance heard no more; a

gentleman came to claim her as a partner for the next dance. But her movements were more languid than usual, though not less graceful, and her words were not so sparkling, nor her face so animated. One after another reminded her of her promise, and she mechanically performed her duty. But the music was no longer inspiriting. Her eyes moved restlessly, as though in search of some one ; and it was no marvel that many thought Miss Langdon *distrait*. Mr. Gifford was the last claimant of her hand, and Constance besought him to excuse her. "You have *had* that pleasure once," she said, with an effort at cheerfulness ; "let that suffice, for I am very weary."

He found her a quiet recess near the supper-room door, and, when she was seated on the little sofa, and he had brought her some refreshment, he commenced to talk, and all the talk was of Hamilton. Mr. Gifford was certainly fascinated, for every word was laudatory of the man whose welfare lay so near her heart. She listened, but neither assented nor disapproved.

"He is not what is termed a ladies' man, I fancy ; yet, Miss Langdon, he is a gallant and chivalric knight. If report be true, he had a difficulty with a gentleman, of late, who mentioned some fair lady's name with disrespect. They say that my new friend, with his strong arm, did make one blow, which laid the insolent man low for a week. Now, if a challenge grew out of this, you women would of course bestow on him high praise, if successful in winging his antagonist, or weep sorely if he fell ! "

The speaker's manner was as careless as his words. Not

so Constance ; her manner was earnest, her words emphatic :

“ You do us wrong,” she said, “ if you think, sir, that true women ever rejoice in the miserable custom of duelling. Women venerate *true* courage—the courage which would risk all in defence of right, which protects the feeble, and shelters the weak ; not the recklessness which would throw away a life dear and useful to others for a myth called honor.”

Her companion looked with a kind of languid amusement on Constance. “ It is rather unphilosophical to give a man who has insulted me an opportunity to shoot me down ! If every man were as much of an *athlete* as our tall Hamilton, he needs no better weapons than those Nature has given him. If I were Miss Langdon, and possessed of her eloquence, I would urge on him the impropriety of accepting a challenge. He is a good target—a very good target, and his antagonist would be a poor marksman if he did not hit him.”

The stranger was now only animated by a desire for teasing. It was pleasant to listen to the words of quick retort which he felt sure would issue from the girl’s lips, and to see the dreaming eyes brighten. But he was destined to disappointment ; her thoughts had left the subject on which they rested but for a moment, and which menaced, in her mind, no immediate danger. One man had punished another for an insult ; from such incidents of every-day life duels but rarely result. Why should it now ? She was thinking of Mrs. Darcy’s words, of a floating rumor of the sort which had

reached her ears a day before. Could it be *she* was to blame for all this? Did the sin rest at *her* door? Was it *her* act which had so altered the man, to her the soul of honor, the model of temperance and morality? Could one word from her alter this? Could her expostulations avail to stop him in a downward course? She turned to her companion.

“Will you do me a favor, sir? Will you ask Mr Hamilton to come to me?”

Mr. Gifford could have laughed heartily, but politeness forbade. He thought she was acting upon his suggestion, and, even through his near-sighted glasses, Constance might have discovered his eyes dancing with mirth. He bowed acquiescence. “Don’t be too hard on the poor fellow when he comes! Be lenient amid your lecturing!”

She looked bewildered, and walked with him to a group of ladies, where she remained while he went about his errand. He found Mr. Hamilton in the supper room, disengaging with some gentlemen. He had just determined to seek Mrs. Danforth, and make his parting bow, when Mr. Gifford accosted him.

“I am the bearer of a message from a lady, sir. She wishes to see you. Her commands are imperative, and admit of no delay.”

Hamilton inquired indifferently, as they walked together, “who was the fair lady who had thus summoned him?”

“Miss Langdon. Ah, here we are! I have arrested, and brought him for trial. I had some difficulty in finding him, but finally discovered him near the decanters!” and,

with a parting glance of sportive meaning, Mr. Gifford took himself away.

A month before, his last remark would have produced no effect on Constance ; now she connected it with all that she had heard, and her hand trembled more nervously as it rested on the arm of Hamilton. To the conservatory they bent their steps, and he seemed determined to prevent all serious converse, for he talked incessantly, and as lightly as though they had been nothing to each other. Entering the conservatory, they encountered a party just leaving it. Mary Stanley held a bouquet of sweet violets in her hand. She gave some to Constance ; then, presenting Hamilton with a few, she said :

“Are they not lovely ? And now they always remind me of Owen Meredith’s poems. Do you remember the one you read aloud, last summer ? ”

“Tell me,” he said ; “I shall remember, then.”

“ ‘There is a pleasure which is born of pain ;
The grave, of all things, hath its violet.’ ”

She passed on, and Hamilton said :

“She is wrong. The words are false ! On the grave of some hopes no violet blooms.”

“They are not planted, then, or else neglected,” said Constance.

“On the soil of some hearts,” he continued, “no sweet or fragrant flower can live. On the grave of some joys, every tender plant must die.”

"No plant," was Constance's faltering answer, "can live, which is not nourished by the Heavenly Dew."

"You would intimate," he said, "that no joy can grow or flourish for *me*. It is an unnecessary warning, yet I thank you. And now, may I ask why I have the pleasure of this interview, or why you did me the honor to summon me to your side?"

Constance hesitated. That calm, expectant face, those cold words, so melodiously uttered, embarrassed her. "I—I wished"—she stammered—"I wished to know why you gave up your profession?—why you cast aside the ambitious projects you had formed?"

"Pardon me. Is it possible my motives or schemes can interest Miss Langdon? Yet, since she condescends to inquire, I will inform her that I project a lengthy tour—a pilgrimage for the expiation of my sins, which are many and great. My occupation interfered; I therefore cast it aside as an iniquitous employment, and a hindrance of holy duties!"

Apparently without noticing the sneering sarcasm, Constance said:

"I thought you devoted to your profession. I thought that even now you were gaining fame—on the very threshold of manhood you were already reaping honors and regard! And now this, on which you built such hopes, proves as nothing to you; now, in the prime of health and vigor, you sink down to inaction, or yield to empty pleasures, or lead a useless life!"

His darkening eyes flashed full upon her, but he made no interruption, and she continued, Mrs. Darcy's words ever ringing in her ears.

" You once were inspired by great resolves; were once actuated by only noble impulses, and engrossed with delight in elegant studies, or in deeper researches; were proud of your self-control. And *now—now*—the man whom I thought the soul of honor, whom I honored for his moderation, his dignity and purity of character, is sinking lower, far lower than those he once despised, yielding to a vice which would debase him ! "

She ceased, and saw the angry light forsake those flashing eyes, and the sense of shame bow that haughty head, and flush those dark cheeks. A pang almost of remorse shot to her woman's heart, weak in her sorrow.

" Forgive me ! " she said. " I had no right to speak; but could I hear unmoved the reports which are afloat of you ? I spoke only as a sister might—as I would bless a friend for speaking to my brother, were he placed as you."

Hamilton, ever fitful in his moods, had again assumed his pride, and, although stung and wounded as never before, he made no sign.

" You are kind in your warnings. I am duly grateful. To whom I am indebted for the calumnious reports which aroused your interest I am unable to conjecture; neither do I care to know. It is enough that they are readily believed; and the pharisaical purity which magnifies the minutest errors of another, I cannot emulate. You have reproached me for despising worldly applause as empty. You have before condemned me for delighting in nothing which is spiritual. You have assured me I am ~~lowered~~ in your esteem; that a fancied hero has proven himself inferior to all the world ! I

cannot condole with you, for you are but gaining an experience we have all to gain ! ”

“ Your sarcasm, sir,” cried Constance, recovering her composure, yet her indignation roused by his bitter words, “ has no power to wound me, for I feel it undeserved ; and the words which I have spoken, though they seem harsh, were dictated by a motive you will not appreciate. In my consciousness of right, in my singleness of heart, I can rejoice, even while you sneer at every kindly intent, and contemptuously reject the proffered friendship ! ”

“ You have spoken plainly,” he rejoined, “ and I will treat you with the like candor. In the change which you and others mark in me, in the weariness of every calm pursuit, in the restless spirit growing day by day, witness *your own work*. I have no inducement to pursue, no desire for the occupations which once charmed me. Lured and incited by the tender love which once I thought was mine, by the guileless spirit which alone had power to animate me, I might once have attained the height on which you profess already to have placed me. Never had one purpose of my mind been thwarted, until by you ! Divested of every natural tie but one, with a heart craving for the sunlight of a true affection, for the bliss of a home and home hearts, I came to you. I loved you as I would be loved—with no half-heartedness, with no cant thoughts or words of ‘ higher love,’ but entirely, completely, purely, unalterably. All in vain. If you had told me I had no power to win your heart, to awaken one chord of sympathy in your breast, I could have borne the pain. But no ! There was a time—

brief, it is true, but full of a transporting joy—when the world was an elysium of bliss to me ; when I *seemed* to bask in the sunshine of an affection as enduring as mine own ; when hopes were bright !——”

“Cease !” cried Constance. “Have you no pity ? Spare me ! spare me !” She had sunk upon a seat, and buried her face in her hands ; but he went on relentlessly :

“In the height of my peace, you tore from me all—bidden, you say, by ‘duty.’ Strange duty, which compelled you to crush my pure hopes, to make life worthless, to cloud my every day with darkness, to sully my every occupation with the memory of a past never to be recalled, with regrets which are ever unavailing ! When you shall hear the careless world gabble of ‘talents wasted,’ or a life become ‘useless or disgraceful,’ think of *your* work—your work, O follower of stern Duty—and of one sacrificed before that altar !”

Constance raised her head, and looked upon him. He could not bear that anguish-stricken and imploring look, and turned his eyes away ; yet, excited beyond control, he continued :

“You would not have me thus reproach you ! It pains your gentleness. Truly, if thoughts of me were ~~gilding~~, you have found a comforter right speedily. The ‘high-principled’ Caxton, the Christian compounder of medicaments—he can administer a healing potion to a wounded heart ; he can sing psalms and hymns, and chants and sacred songs. He is a devotee of Duty ; he need not be sacrificed !”

Constance spoke low and faintly. “You are wrong.

He is nothing to me; we are friends only. Can you not believe?"

He did believe, and for a time the torrent of bitter words was stayed. "I may have been harsh in my expression of intense feeling," he said; "but you will forgive much to one who suffers much."

"You were cruel; but I forgive all."

There was an expression of such utter wretchedness upon her face, that Hamilton for some moments was silent. The distant music reached their ears; the hum of voices, the sound of gayety oppressed them both, and a heavy weight rested on each heart. Constance was undergoing that severest of all trials, the trial of walking in a clouded way, when duty is not distinctly marked, and when the heavenly light of wisdom and clear judgment seems withdrawn.

"We will not part unkindly to-night," said Hamilton, in a voice of concentrated emotion. "Constance, we may never meet again. Before the close of another day, I may be alike insensible to joy or sorrow. By all the love which I have borne you, I conjure you to forget my errors, my late clouded deeds, or, at least, to honor my memory with some portion of that regard which once you lavished on an ideal, and which I have forfeited. It is not too much to ask, that those who sleep the last sleep of earth should be judged leniently—should be remembered with tender regret!"

Her flowing tears had ceased, and she fixed her wild, dilated eyes upon him in mute inquiry. At length the lips deathlike in their pallor, unclosed.

"He was right!" she gasped. "You go, to-morrow, to a meeting—"

She could say no more, but Hamilton defined her thought.

"An affair of honor. My poor Constance, I should not have told you; but this parting might be our last. Could I bear to leave you without one word of tenderness, without one vow of yours to kind remembrance? I read in that face of anguish all the pain of this parting; then, ah, why were we ever thus cruelly divided? But all is past, and now we make, it may be, our last farewell!"

Constance had endured the knowledge of his infidelity, the severance of the tie which bound her, and the separation in all its bitterness, patiently and unmurmuringly; she had even striven for cheerfulness, that her sorrow might not darken her home; but she had been supported by the ability to pray for the benighted soul, and by the hope that, ere long, it might be guided to the light. But this last trial overwhelmed her like a bitter flood. "O Hope of the hopeless," she cried, wildly, "save me from this agony, this parting eternal! Let him not be lost forever!"

Hamilton strove in vain to soothe her fears, for she besought, with an eloquence unknown to herself, that he would give up his resolve. She plead in Bessie's name, as though that name were a charm. Her entreaties were unavailing. She asked too much, he thought; she required him to leave an insult unrevengeto yield what he fancied his honor. This might not be. At this time she felt how powerless all reasoning was with one who acknowledged no obedience to the law of God. She made one more appeal.

"If you have ever loved me—by all that was happy in

the past—if you would not kill me by your refusal, I implore you to give up this miserable quarrel and its fatal consequences!” She would have fallen at his feet in her entreaty, but he prevented her.

“Is not your word law to me, my beloved? Could I refuse one request of yours? I can no longer view my life as worthless, if it is endeared to you! Be calm, be tranquil in this thought.”

The transition from despair to hope in some natures is rapid. The temperament of Constance was sanguine, almost mercurial; yet she could scarce believe in the reality of the implied promise, and the change in the man, whose will lately had seemed inflexible; and therefore, moved by the intense apprehension of his danger, with the urgency of a heart not yet satisfied, she again appealed to him:

“You promise the meeting shall not be—that you will risk nothing?”

He evaded her, but replied, reproachfully:

“Can you doubt the power of your influence? If such risk could make you wretched, would I incur it? Is not your happiness dearer to me than all the world? Constance, dearest, the blessedness of the knowledge gained of your unfaded love, this night, blots out the misery of the past years!”

With such words he soothed her emotion, and her heart, filled with gratitude, could see no sorrow; all was forgotten in the present deliverance. He had granted her request; all must be well. When her face no longer bore traces of her emotion, when she had regained composure, he gave

her his arm once more, and they returned to the drawing rooms.

Constance found Mrs. Gourlay bent upon prolonging her stay for half an hour. She could ill have supported this ordeal, after the excitement which she had undergone, if Hamilton had not preserved her from the obtrusive attentions of others, and prevented notice of her abstraction. She went mechanically through the formula of etiquette, and never knew how she was indebted to him for freedom from annoyance. During the time she remained at Mrs. Danforth's, this strange man used every art to fascinate. His attentions were not of that nature to make her the object of impertinent gossip, yet it was he who was ever at her side, and who at last intercepted Dr. Caxton, and handed her to the carriage. When Mr. and Mrs. Gourlay drove away with their charge, Hamilton walked rapidly homeward. He had much work to accomplish, and the hour was late.

CHAPTER XX.

"Be yet advised, nor urge me to an outrage;
Thy power is lost—unhand me!"

EDWARD, THE BLACK PRINCE.

THE conservatory in which the conversation related in the last chapter had been held, opened upon a side yard of considerable extent, which was enclosed by a high wall, and possessed two gates, used by the servants as modes of ingress and egress from and to the street. Hamilton had chosen this conservatory as the most retired spot for the interview which must ensue between Constance and himself; for, the dancing being then at its height, this abode of fragrant shrubs and flowers would be quite deserted.

When the stormy scene between them had terminated, and they had returned to the crowd of gay revellers, a man, who had been concealed behind some lemon and orange trees in huge boxes, stole quietly forth from his hiding place, and, creeping stealthily into the garden, made his way into the street unobserved; and long before Hamilton reached his own house, he had been hovering thereabout, awaiting his coming. As Edward approached his door, this man confronted him. It was Maxwell.

"You here?" said Hamilton. "I thought you at M——!"

"You thought to escape me," rejoined Maxwell. "I might there have waited long for you. I heard the soft whispers of love, to-night, which bade you stay. Ah, I know well, now, why the fair lady's name should not be breathed by the lips of other men. Such tender pleadings might have extorted a cowardly promise from a heart less brave than yours; but you, 'the soul of honor,' the hero of a pretty girl's imagination, to be so easily cajoled, passes belief. But"—and the voice lost its sneer, as he added, hoarsely, with an oath of fearful import—"you shall not thus escape me! Proud son of a proud and heartless father——!"

The sentence was left unfinished. Edward's ear had detected the sharp click of a pistol. In an instant he had wrested the weapon from his hand, and the two men were grappling in a fierce struggle. It was of brief duration; the lighter form of Maxwell could not well cope with the superior strength of Hamilton, and he was speedily at his mercy.

"Lying eavesdropper!" cried Hamilton, his face livid with rage, his voice husky with passion, "you knew the promise made was but to soothe the fears of a woman. You knew I was no man to refuse the meeting that was purposed. Coward and would-be assassin! you are too base to die by the weapon of a gentleman!" and his hand tightened its terrible grasp on Maxwell's throat, but suddenly it relaxed its hold. It may be that some invisible ministrant of mercy stayed the avenging hand. It may be that some thought of the world he so labored to despise arrested his dread purpose.

It may be that something, even in that distorted face, recalled some early memory, which made him pause in his relentless course. Be that as it may, his passion had as suddenly waned as it had risen, and he released his grasp on Maxwell, and rose to his full height, looking with contempt and loathing on his antagonist, now struggling to his feet.

"Poor wretch!" he said, "I will not wreak my vengeance or my wrath on an unarmed man. Despising you, as I do with all my soul, I yet do not refuse to meet you as you will. Go, be free; it is not at these doors, or at this time, your fate shall be decided."

Maxwell made no answer, but his glance was like that of a baffled fiend. Hamilton walked calmly to his door, drew out his latch key, and entered. The vicinity of his house happened that night to be imperfectly guarded, as the police were elsewhere employed. The disturbance, so quickly terminated, awakened no alarm, and at this hour the inhabitants of the surrounding houses were quietly sleeping.

Hamilton finished expeditiously some necessary arrangements, changed his evening dress, enclosed some papers of importance, and two letters, hastily penned, in his desk, securely locked it, and stole softly to the door of the nursery, advancing with cautious steps to the bedside of the sleeping child. Bessie's face was upturned; the dark lashes rested heavily on the rosy cheeks; the soft brown hair, tossed over the pillow, was a tangled mass of curls, and the straight, clear-cut features seemed more infantile than usual. He pressed his lips to the soft face, murmuring, "My little sister! my innocent, pure darling!" She moved a little, as

though disturbed or partly roused by the familiar voice ; the full lips unclosed—"Brother, dear brother!"—then she was dreaming once more. Hamilton's eyes were dimmed now, and he heard his name breathed softly by some one, and, turning, saw Miss Susan standing, in her dressing gown, beside him.

"I am going away immediately—on some business of importance," he said hurriedly, and in a whisper. "Do not detain me ; I am late. But why are you awake?"

"I could not sleep ; I was reading, and I heard you come in, and came to meet you."

He again stooped, and kissed the child. "I may not return for some time—for weeks. I intrust her to your keeping. Take care of her—take care of her." He spoke with some agitation. "I have troubled your good heart of late ; I have grieved you sorely. Forgive me, dearest aunt. And now, good-by." He gave her one fond embrace ; before she could question or detain him, he was gone.

Gone—and whither ? The shadow of a coming sorrow rested more heavily on Miss Mortimer's heart. The gray morning dawned, but the sunshine brought no gladness. The burden of anxious cares was not removed, nor the vague forebodings of evil. There were clouds in her sky that day, and Miss Susan could see no light.

CHAPTER XXI.

"To rear the graces into second life ;
To give society its highest taste ;
Well-ordered home man's best delight to make ;
And by submissive wisdom, modest skill,
With every gentle, care-eluding art,
To raise the virtues, animate the bliss,
And sweeten all the toils of human life :
This be the female dignity and praise."

THOMSON'S SEASONS.

"MISS CONSTANCE," said a smart-looking servant, opening the door of the parlor in some haste.

"What is it, Martha?" cried the young lady, roused from her reveries, and regarding with astonishment the maid's widely opened eyes and eager face, and expecting some announcement of amazing importance.

"If you please, miss, would you tell me how to spell Gregory?"

Constance gave the required information, and the girl departed.

"What did she mean?" said Albert, who was laughing behind his book.

"Oh! she has a brother of that name, I believe, and I

suspect she is writing a letter. You have no idea how literary she is in her tastes. Mamma had given her some books to read, as an amusement—some old magazines. She told me, the other day, that she 'had *perused* them over,' and would I be so kind as to let her have some more. There was one story which had pleased her greatly, which she pronounced 'sweet—pretty.' I believe two friends become rivals in a love affair; one dies, and his ghost haunts the other, and the whole ends in suicide!"

The brother and sister laughed over this strongly developed taste for the horrible. Albert suggested, that if Martha enjoyed poetry, a library of poetical volumes, commencing with *Alonzo the Brave* and *the Fair Imogene*, and terminating with *Giles Scroggins's Ghost*, would be a suitable course of reading.

"There is, however," remarked the father, "a certain fascination which ghostly tales possess even for the educated. I remember that, as a boy, I delighted in them, and even made efforts to write them. I would by no means encourage such predilection in one of my children, for it fills the mind with wild fancies and superstitious imaginings."

"I enjoy," said Albert, "such romances as '*Zanoni*.' Those Rosicrucian mysteries, to which no key is given, stimulate my fancy and my imagination, while the elegant and poetic language of the author clothes the whole in a most enchanting garb. Constance pores over the works of *Fouqué*; and '*Sintram*' and '*Undine*' possess no greater charm for her than '*Thiodolf*,' or the '*Wild Love*.' So you perceive we have inherited your early taste, sir!"

His father smiled, and the son continued, blithely :

" We are both enthusiasts—we are both sanguine, ever soaring on the 'pinions of hope,' as somebody or another says, in 'the airy regions of imagination !' Why do you not speak, Constance ? Do you know I am talking of you as well as myself ? " and he commenced to rally her on her silence, and profess his belief that she was growing more quiet day by day.

" Oh ! Albert," she replied, a little impatiently, " I have nothing to say."

" Pshaw ! You should not wait to speak till you have 'something to say.' Of all things, young ladies should avoid taciturnity ; it is very unfeminine ! "

Constance was in no mood for bantering ; she could not reply, and Albert pursued :

" You had better chop logic, meddle with politics, or chatter gossip of Mrs. Green's yellow cap, or Miss Brown's 'hateful' snuff-colored bonnet, than hold your tongue ! "

" There are times," said Constance, " when it is difficult to talk. Even papa will allow that."

" Yes," said the father. " Yet conversation is the great pleasure of social life, whether at home or in society. Woman especially can exert great influence in this way. The example of her daily life, its purity or its devotion, may be known only by her own immediate family, or those who come within her immediate influence ; but in her intercourse with others, her words can possess great power. It is not enough that a woman should be amiable, or a good house-keeper, or strict in her observance of outward religious

offices. I am no advocate of the views of Lucy Stone, Mrs. Rose, or those women who are weakest minded when they think themselves strong; who rob themselves of dignity when they assert what they term their 'rights; ' who would degrade their sex by despoiling it of its loveliness and its gentleness. Yet a woman who does not cultivate her head, will find her heart ill regulated. If she allow herself to speak of nothing but fashions, food, and servants, she will be weak and frivolous, and contracted in thought. She will be no companion to her husband, no comfort to her father, have no influence with her brother. They may admire her as a pretty toy, regard her as a tidy housekeeper, or love her as a child; but woman, as a helpmeet, a sharer of joys, a consoler of sorrows, an instructress of those children given to her, she will never become. The influence of woman in her home, or in society, must be great. It must be felt by *others*, not acknowledged by herself. She must use the talents given her, not to attract to her side a group of admiring men, but to elevate and refine those with whom she has to do. There is a certain class of men, for instance, who withdraw from the arguments of the good and able of their own sex, yet from the lips of a wise and holy woman will bear to hear much; and the earnestness of her own heart pleadings, and the clear conclusions of her intellect, guided by the inspirations of her perfect faith and trust, will move them more than the sound, logical deductions and weighty reasonings of learned men. Thus, my daughter, would I have your sex doing good, not *only* by your gentleness and loving devotion, by your attentions to home duties and feminine tasks, but

using *all* the talents you have received ; ever true and faithful, clinging closer to us amid the storms of life, and drawing us upward to the life immortal ; pointing the way by example, softening the way by prayer."

Constance's head was bowed ; she was weeping, and for a time no one spoke. It was Albert's voice which broke the silence.

"Father, the Athenians were great conversationists. The account given in the Travels of Anacharsis, which I am reading, of the manners of the people of Athens, is very entertaining."

"They esteemed," said Mr. Langdon, "wit and humor aright. They were gay without coarseness, and witty without severity. People in this age often fail in this respect ; they think that wit consists in satire, and, instead of endeavoring to please with its brilliancy, they wound by its sharpness. Again, there are persons so staid and stiff, that they are only precise and commonplace in conversation ; they discover none of those lively sallies which provoke mirth, those sparkles of genius, those outbursts of eloquence which elevate and move the soul. Again, there are some who reserve all their powers for exercise in public ; who never enliven their homes with the scintillations of their genius. I have known one who was considered a very clever talker in general society, and yet was a veritable mute at home. This is unpardonable. The person who will not contribute to the enjoyment of the domestic fireside, does not deserve the smiles and applause of a multitude."

At this moment Mrs. Langdon entered, and in her was found another element of cheerfulness. The dissertation on men and manners was discontinued, while each member of the little circle endeavored to put in practice the instruction given. Thus harmony and love and cheerful converse reigned preëminent.

CHAPTER XXII.

*“Here has been such a stormy encounter
Betwixt my cousin Captain, and this soldier,
bout, I know not what !*

A FAIR QUARREL.

HE will not die. The danger is past.” The speaker was a grave, bald-headed physician, and the person addressed a military man, in undress uniform.

“I am sincerely glad to hear that he will live,” rejoined the officer, “for my friend is terribly disturbed about the matter. Not that I think he cared more for shooting the rascal than he would for putting a dog out of the way; but those words of Maxwell’s at the last—whatever they might be—proved powerful in their effect.” As he said the last words, he eyed the physician narrowly.

“I do not know what the words were,” said the Doctor, honestly. “I heard him say, after he had fallen, as Mr. Hamilton leaned over him, ‘You live, I die; but I can embitter your whole life with the anguish of remorse;’ and then his voice seemed failing, and your friend bent closer. I heard no more. I saw Mr. Hamilton start backward with a

look of horror; I saw the wounded man's face, convulsed with pain and hatred, grow more ghastly; in another moment Mr. Maxwell had fainted. This is all I know, sir, on my word of honor."

"I believe you, sir," replied Captain Tracy; "and now this secret, being none of our concern, and the entire affair being an unpleasant and dangerous subject of discussion, I trust there is no need for me to say, it is best for us to hold our tongues thereupon. The patient is out of danger. I repeat, I am glad of it. Mr. Hamilton will be happy to know it, and your professional skill shall be well rewarded. I am entrusted with this note."

He placed a packet in the physician's hands, bade him "good morning," and made the best of his way to a hotel, where he found Hamilton awaiting his appearance. As he heard his friend's step, he looked toward him with a haggard, anxious face. The Captain's report was alleviating. He was made to repeat again and again the physician's words; and at length, persuaded he was not deceived, Hamilton sank into a chair with a sense of infinite relief.

"You need have no fear," remarked the officer, "that Dr. Craik has any suspicions of the purport of Maxwell's words. I have cross-examined him, and am assured of his ignorance."

"Thank you," was the short reply. "What is your next plan, Hamilton?" pursued Captain Tracy.

"I shall return to M—— to-night. I have been absent two weeks. Through your exertions and friendly offices, the affair has been kept very quiet. I am desirous to be at

home for various reasons. There is nothing now to detain me here. You say that—that—that—Maxwell will not see me?"

"No; and the Doctor thought an interview with you would agitate him too much in his present weak state. You could do no good. He is not charitably disposed. You had better let him go his way, and you go yours. Your pursuits and destinies are very different!" and Captain Tracy laughed.

But Mr. Hamilton did not reëcho the laugh, and, after some time they separated, the one to return to his quarters, the other to return to M—.

During the several hours which elapsed while he was journeying, Edward Hamilton meditated on the events of the past two weeks; his late interview with Tracy, and the excuses which he should offer to Constance for his deception. Having discovered the depth of her affection, and the agony which his danger caused her, and unable to endure her entreaties, he had (although his purpose was not altered) implied that he had yielded to her desires. He thought himself justified in the course which he pursued. The duel, he argued, he could not in honor forego; he had openly insulted Maxwell, and therefore, when "called out" by him, he must not refuse. He had brought disgrace and stain upon his name already: he would not in addition be branded as a coward. Constance loved him, and, womanlike, she did not reason—she felt; thence her passionate prayer that he would not risk his life. But would she wish him to sacrifice his sense of honor to her fears? Never; it was unlike her heroic nature.

And when she saw him once more, *safe*—when he could tell her all, she would pardon; she would blot out the sad remembrance of the past in the reunion of the present. His heart grew light, as thus sanguinely he pleaded his cause, almost forgetful of the miserable forebodings of the past weeks. The interview in Mrs. Danforth's conservatory had recalled his confidence in his own power and influence over the woman he adored. On the morning of the duel, he had been content to die, knowing that she loved him. Yet he was smitten with remorse for his promise to Constance; and although he would not sacrifice his reputation with the world as a man of honor, he would his revenge, determining to fire in the air. But Maxwell had saluted him with a scornful inquiry for "Miss Langdon," which had once more roused his resentment, so that he forgot all save his passion. He had escaped, but his antagonist was wounded, and for a time his very hours seemed numbered. The terrible remorse of Hamilton would have appeared unnatural to any one but Captain Tracy, who knew the purport of Maxwell's last words ere he fainted. When he was pronounced out of danger, Hamilton threw off the dread which had oppressed him, and returned to M—. The secret (whatever it might be) he must communicate to Miss Susan, and then be hidden in their hearts forever, unless— But why prophesy evil? He feared no misfortune, he defied sorrow, if Constance was but his once more. That night Hamilton and Miss Susan had a lengthy conversation in the library. It was very late when they parted to seek some repose. His last

words were: "You are always my comforter, and my kindest adviser."

And her answer: "You are safe; you are spared unending misery! My heart is full of praise!"

8*

CHAPTER XXIII.

"The time for tender thoughts and soft endearments
Is fled away and gone ; joy has forsaken us ;
Our hearts have now another part to play."

Rowe.

CONSTANCE had trusted with confidence to the implied promise received from Edward, and had bitterly reproached herself as the cause of his late clouded course. The thought was misery, and she had neither interest in daily duties nor comfort in daily work. Yet she employed herself more than usual, that she might divert her mind from painful imaginings, and strove to appear as usual in her family. When, a few days after Mrs. Danforth's entertainment, she heard a rumor of the duel in which Hamilton had engaged, and of the probable death of his opponent, she felt as if all hope had gone. Her Edward false to his plighted word ! her Edward a murderer ! Constance had never suffered as she suffered then. The gossip was soon quieted. It never spread widely, but she knew its truth. When she learned the antagonist yet lived, there was some sort of comfort in the assurance, and the absence of Hamilton from M——

gave her time for reflection. Perhaps, of all thoughts, that he had deceived *her*, proved the most bitter. She felt her boasted influence was as nothing. He could pledge his word to relieve her fears, to soothe her sorrow, to calm her anxiety, yet what power did she really possess over the man whose love for her was so wild in its intensity of passion, and whose fascination she now almost dreaded? She shuddered when she recalled their late interview, and remembered that all her past resolves, her determination to avoid his society, and the dangerous charm of his presence and conversation, had vanished; and had he but met her again, and besought with his ardent and impassioned language the renewal of his cancelled promise, she would without hesitation have linked her destiny with his. Amid the cares and distress which these conflicting emotions occasioned, Constance had no counsellor. Her father had been concerned for her happiness when first she had annulled her engagement, and had sent her to Clifton for a change of scene. She had returned so cheerful, that he was willing to believe her heart had not been sorely wounded, and, manlike, considered that she could not so readily have surrendered her lover, had her affections been unalterably engaged. Of late the various rumors of Hamilton, and his abandonment of his profession, had caused Mr. Langdon to rejoice secretly over what he termed his daughter's escape from a union with a man who, however unexceptionable in character heretofore, was now suspected of sinking into dissipation. The mother had understood better her child's heart, and had read, despite the calm exterior, the gentle cheerfulness of a Christian

woman, the inward struggle with a deep sorrow. At length she also was blinded, and thought this grief was wearing away; that time was healing the scar, and her child's character would be the more perfected by the suffering through which she had passed. Constance's severest trial had been before she had fully determined on the severance of the tie which bound her to Hamilton. That once accomplished, the self-abnegation, the yielding of her desires to her conviction of duty, brought an inward peace. Though less gay and careless than before, she was calmed in manner and chastened in thought, and, resting more upon the only sure and perfect Love, was sustained and comforted. The love which she had borne Hamilton was not, however, lessened in degree. Thus, when she heard the floating rumors which gave her pain, her affection rose in his behalf, and, wild with sorrow, perplexity, and doubt, she trusted alone to her fancied power and influence, and sought the interview so fraught with sorrow to both their hearts. Now she perceived it was hopeless to place dependence on a man governed alone by his impulses, his feelings or desires. Her dread of his power over her was extravagantly heightened by her present state of mind and body, for her nerves were almost unstrung by the events recorded. She examined herself with deep humility, and besought guidance and strength in her sore trial. Her resolutions for the future were soon put to the test; for Mr. Hamilton, upon the very morning after his return, called at Belmont street, and inquired for Constance. She sent word she could not see him, and he departed, discomfited and chagrined, but yet the more eagerly bent on the accomplish-

ment of his purpose to see her again, and then, in truth, win her for himself.

One pleasant morning, Constance was making some formal visits, when Edward Hamilton espied her, from a distance, entering a house, with the mistress of which he was acquainted. His course was planned, and, as soon as practicable, he followed her there. He had but paid his compliments to Mrs. Jordan, when Constance rather abruptly rose, and made her adieux. Hamilton, though disturbed, was not easily disheartened. He observed that, in her hasty exit, she had dropped a handkerchief; so, making some graceful apology to the lady of the mansion, he said he would do himself the honor of returning it to Miss Langdon. Quickly as Constance had walked, he speedily overtook her; and the sight of his face and the tones of his voice at her side, startled her, and made her heart beat more rapidly. She knew now that there was but one way to rid herself of these distressing scenes; that, while he felt assured of her love, he would leave no means untried to gain her hand. With a trembling heart she prepared herself for that which must follow.

"You were running quite away from me," he said, uncovering his head. "Hostilities must be at an end between us, for see, I have brought a flag of truce!" He dropped the handkerchief upon her muff.

She acknowledged the courtesy coldly. She could not at once command herself for speech.

"Let me walk by your side," he continued, gently. "I have much to say—much to plead in extenuation of my con-

duct, and forgiveness to crave. Would that I could believe it were not needed ; that your heart could pardon me, even before I speak ; that those eyes which could rain tears of pity, could now seem full of gentleness ! ”

“ Sir,” cried Constance, in her exaggerated fear of his influence recoiling from his side, “ I have no desire nor right to hear excuses from your lips. You mistake me greatly, do you believe me capable of harboring a thought of anger for that which is *past*. I should rather be grateful that the eyes which wept for you were opened at length to the truth. From this time forward we are forever divided. There is no hope—none. The hand which could rashly take the life of another, can never clasp mine. The love of the past, lavished on an idol of my own creation, cannot be yours ; it is gone—gone forever. It will never be recalled ! ”

She had spoken with all the earnestness of her excitable nature, and was not fully sensible of the force of the expression she used. She but felt that they were separated from each other, and he must know the truth. Not so Hamilton ; the words she spoke were burned into his heart. Her very recoiling attitude struck him with horror. The whole scene was impressed upon his memory with terrible distinctness. Happier had he been in other years, could he have forgotten them ! He stood like one stunned. He made no answer.

“ My way lies here,” continued Constance, “ and yours, sir—— ” She pointed with her hand in a contrary direction, then, without looking toward him, moved onward. Mechanically he turned as she had indicated, and Constance reached her home alone. Seeking her own apartment, she

fell upon her knees, and the sad, weary heart poured forth its sorrows to the all-wise, all-loving, and ever-present Comforter.

It was impossible but that the conflict through which she had passed should leave some trace. Thus many remarked that she looked paler; but her smile was sweeter and not less frequent, her sympathy as ready, her daily duties performed with care and interest. When Easter came, and she had wreathed the font and altar of the church with flowers, and rejoiced in the joy of the great festival, for her the cross seemed indeed to blossom with beauty, peace, and hope.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“ Farewell! and ne'er such sorrows tear
That fickle heart of thine, my Katy!
Thou may'st find those will love thee dear
But not a love like mine, my Katy.”

BURNS.

MR. MAXWELL had been dangerously wounded. It was many weeks before he was able to return to New York. Possessed of great recuperative power, he lost soon even the appearance of illness. Late in the spring he was once more a visitor at the Harcourts. Lionel Fairfax was happy in the favor of Mona, and was imploring her to hasten the day of their union, when she suddenly reassumed all the caprices for which she had been remarkable during the winter. Lionel bore these very philosophically, until, one evening, he observed a small locket pendent from a pretty bracelet which adorned her delicate arm. He smilingly remarked it, when Mona petulantly drew it under her sleeve. The impatient movement broke the slender chain which supported the locket, and it fell to the floor—opened.

Lionel stooped to raise it, and thus perceived the hand-

some features of Maxwell. Mona's face crimsoned. She laughed a forced, hollow laugh, while she said :

"He is a friend, you know, and it is the fashion to exchange pictures!"

"Did you give yours to him?" asked Fairfax, through his set teeth.

"How horror-stricken you look, Lionel! How absurd to be vexed about a mere trifle!"

"Did you give yours to him?" he repeated, almost fiercely.

"Yes," said Mona, honestly. She felt what was coming, and could breathe freely.

"Do you know that man is an enemy of my family; that he was engaged in an affair of honor with Edward Hamilton; that now his aim is to ruin his reputation by slanderous and calumnious reports?"

"I did not know that Edward Hamilton was a member of your family, and therefore entitled to my tender regard," replied Mona, sarcastically.

"He is a connection, and highly valued," answered Lionel. "You know that he is dear to me as a brother, and that all belonging to me are bound to him by ties of gratitude!"

"What does all this mean?" cried Mona. "Must I needs, for your sake, adopt your connections as my friends, my beloved friends, and hate and abjure Mr. Maxwell because your haughty cousin chose to shoot him down? For shame, Lionel, to hint at such slavery of opinion! I would never endure such tyranny!"

Fairfax's face was pale, and his expression determined. "Mona," he said, tossing aside the mischievous trinket, "you must once for all choose between Maxwell and me. You cannot have two lovers. If this villain has supplanted me in your affection, speak, and I will leave you forever!"

Mona rose. Lionel could not have believed that fair face could express such anger.

"Your language is insolent, sir. I have already informed you that the gentleman on whom you bestow such vulgar abuse is my friend. I shall not yield the pleasure of his friendship for your threat, or at your command. It is I who should be indignant; it is you, sir, who should sue for pardon!"

"I see! I see!" cried the unhappy young man, no longer proudly, but despairingly. "I have lost you, Mona. I am hateful to you. I release you from your promise!"

Miss Harcourt's courtesy was profound. "I am *happy* to be released, Mr. Fairfax, from the bitter bondage of the last five months. Accept my grateful thanks! Good evening, sir;" and she withdrew from the drawing room.

CHAPTER XXV.

"I know not why
I love this youth ; and I have heard you say
Love's reason's without reason."

SHAKESPEARE.

MR. HARCOURT was more angry than he had ever been with his daughter, when he learned that she had dismissed Lionel Fairfax. Mona kept out of his sight as much as possible, so as not to hear his reproaches and reproof. The only account which the father could gain of the affair, was given in few words.

"Papa, Lionel Fairfax was exacting, jealous, suspicious, and impertinent. I will do him the justice to say, I believe he was truly attached to me ; but he made me wretched by his freaks and angry moods. He saw I was unhappy, and released me. Can you, my dear papa, be less kind, and wish your only child to link her fate to a man she could not love ?"

But Mr. Harcourt could not be entirely satisfied, although he held his peace. This account of young Fairfax was very different from his preconceived idea of his character—that of

a pleasant, kind-hearted, amiable youth, whose chief fault was a too yielding temper. Yet Mrs. Harcourt vindicated her daughter's course, and assured her husband that *Mona* must be right. "Women gain a keen knowledge of the disposition of a man during an engagement of several months, and it was, without doubt, *Mona*'s generosity which forbade her giving a fuller statement of *Lionel*'s conduct."

Meanwhile the discarded lover had retired to Clifton, for the ostensible purpose of overlooking some affairs of his father, and superintending the arrangements made for the arrival of the family at the country house. All interested in *Mona* and *Lionel*'s betrothal now rejoiced in its former secrecy, as it had spared the young people much mortification and annoyance now that their engagement was dissolved.

Three weeks after the retreat of *Lionel*, Mr. Maxwell gained the prize for which both had striven—*Mona* was again affianced. Mrs. Harcourt was only happy in her daughter's happiness; but, to do Mr. Harcourt justice, he expressed strong disapproval, and at first refused his consent to her proposed union with a man whose antecedents were unknown, and whose character was not without reproach. But his child's existence seemed to depend upon gaining her father's approval. The gay, bright *Mona* seemed wholly changed to a grave, an earnest, an anxious woman, as she stood beside her father, and for the last time plead her cause in person.

"It is true, papa, that he has neither relatives nor friends in this country; that he is but the adopted son of an eccen-

tric officer in our navy, and that officer is now dead. But he is so earnest, so honorable, so truthful in himself; his face, his manner show him worthy of your confidence, as he is already possessed of my lasting affection. He is, certainly, several years my senior. But what of that? He is sufficiently young in feeling, and his more matured years will enable him to exercise a better influence over my flightiness and waywardness."

She confessed that, although unknown to herself, it was her regard for Mr. Maxwell that had been in part the cause of her distaste for Lionel Fairfax; but she said that she should never have annulled her promise to the latter, if he had not released her. In fine, she painted in gloomy colors her misery, if her father prevented her choice in this matter. Thus, although with many misgivings, Mr. Harcourt, after some deliberation, consented, and the wedding day was set for the middle of June.

How different was Mona's present conduct from her former treatment of Lionel! She never thought of flirting; and, although this second engagement was also secret, through the skilful management of Maxwell, no maiden could be more regardful of her *pretendée's* slightest wish than Miss Harcourt. Maxwell was a wise lover, and by no means as extravagant in his zealous devotion as Fairfax. He cultivated Mr. Harcourt, not obsequiously, but respectfully; he complimented Mrs. Harcourt, and was easy or brilliant with Mona, or tender in manner, treating her as one treats a petted child, whom he could control if he would, but preferred to indulge.

CHAPTER XXVI.

" Oh ! blessed things are children !
The gifts of heavenly love ;
They stand betwixt our worldly hearts
And better things above."

MISS SUSAN's heart was for a time made glad by the more quiet and domestic habits of Hamilton. He was again ready to be her companion in walks and talks and holiday diversions ; and, although he did not return to his professional pursuits, this gave her no uneasiness, while he seemed himself in other respects. He was more subject to dreamy and silent moods than before, and Miss Mortimer thought she knew the cause, and that it was sufficient to account for his fitful humors. Occasionally he would give some entertainment to some gentlemen friends, and then he was always the life of the party, and proved himself a man of wit and humor, or again a profound scholar.

Amid all his faults, his wildness, and capricious temper, he was ever considerate toward Miss Susan, ever affectionate and respectful, ever solicitous for her comfort. For Bessie his love seemed to increase day by day. When at home, he

did not seem happy unless the child was in his sight ; and she was growing more docile and companionable. Miss Mortimer witnessed with pleasure their mutual devotion, and was even amused to observe that Hamilton was exacting and jealous in his love for the child, and would encourage her to repeat again and again her assurances of her affection for him. If he went out, her little face was always raised for the parting kiss ; when he returned, he was greeted as warmly.

When the month of May arrived, and with it the beauties of spring, the violets and anemones and forget-me-nots, the brother and sister, with Miss Susan, would often stroll beyond the city limits to the spot where bloomed these delicate and fragile flowers ; and the little girl's basket would be filled, and she would dance as gayly over the violets growing beneath her feet as though life had no care, no sorrow.

They were all three returning from one of these expeditions. Miss Mortimer leaning on Edward's arm, when the good aunt said :

“ Is not that your friend Mr. Ambrose ? ” and Bessie sprang forward to meet a clergyman advancing in their direction.

The meeting was very cordial, and he was brought to her brother and aunt by the eager child. He could not then have passed them with only a ceremonious recognition, if he had been so disposed. Miss Susan was very glad of an excuse for presenting Hamilton to Mr. Ambrose. The last-named gentleman was by no means an observer of formalities.

ties. His proffered hand Mr. Hamilton could not refuse, and was, despite himself, favorably impressed by the hearty, genial warmth of Mr. Ambrose's manner. His own demeanor was courteous, although reserved. He smiled when Bessie was pleasantly mentioned by her reverend friend, and remarked to Miss Susan, when they walked homeward, "that Mr. Ambrose was quite an agreeable man."

"Yet you have seen him but a moment—only to exchange a half-dozen words with him! Oh, Edward! how I should like you to know him more intimately. He would just suit you, he is so sensible and well informed."

"Thank you. He is your friend, and, as such, must merit my respect."

"Then I may some time ask him to the house? I have been afraid you would not like me to do so; and he does not feel at liberty to call upon me uninvited, as I am not one of his parishioners."

Hamilton looked hurt. "You know I have always wished and begged you to consider the house quite your own, and to entertain and invite such guests as you should choose. The fear which you express, Miss Susan, does not seem kind to me; for, however I may have failed of success, my endeavor has ever been to render your home happy."

"And, indeed, you have succeeded, my dear Edward; I have no wish ungratified. You must never fancy, for one instant, I am insensible of your affection and kindness. But, remembering your distaste for the clergy, I did not like to invite one who was not my rector, lest I should provoke your prejudices. I am glad to know my scruples were unnecessary."

She looked happy, and Hamilton was pleased.

Not long afterward, Mr. Ambrose did call, but Miss Susan only received him, although Bessie, who was present, was inclined to monopolize his attentions. Mr. Hamilton did not make his appearance.

“The *good* people come to see you, Miss Susan,” he remarked gayly, afterward. “He did not ask for me, so there was no rudeness on my part.”

But Miss Mortimer was not satisfied.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"A woman's will
Is not so strong in anger, as her skill."

DAVENANT.

"Oh, jealousy! Love's eclipse!"

MRS. DANFORTH was seated in her drawing room, one rainy evening, deplored the inclemency of the weather to her friend Miss Courcy, who was spending a few weeks of the month of May at the house of this hospitable lady.

"Ah, Margaret, you should have been here last winter; the city was so gay! Now, every one seems unusually dull and spiritless."

Margaret laughed. "Very dull! I have been in M—— one week, and this is the first evening we have had to ourselves, Sunday not excepted. I have been to one grand party, to two dinners, and two or three smaller entertainments, and the whole community of M—— seemed to have called upon me. There is a ring, now. I fancy we are not to be undisturbed even to-night."

A servant ushered into the parlor a gentleman.

"Ah, Mr. Hamilton, I am so pleased to see you! I have been lamenting that Miss Courcy must find this place

very stupid, after her New York gayeties; and now you have arrived to enliven us."

Margaret's greeting of the visitor was very cordial.

"I had but just learned that you were here," he said, "and could not forego the pleasure of calling upon you. Besides, I rather fancy being a 'rainy-day friend.' If one's society is not acceptable at other times, it is tolerated with a good grace on stormy evenings!"

An hour flew by pleasantly. Margaret was a sensible, well-informed woman, and Hamilton and she had ever been agreeable and congenial companions. She was a musician, also, and he was passionately fond of music.

Mr. Danforth was engaged in conversation with his wife; so, upon the plea of being very old friends, Mr. Hamilton and Miss Courcy were left in undisturbed possession of the back drawing room. The former was leaning over the piano, while the lady played a low, sad air, which seemed but the expression of his thoughts. They were both silent, when she had finished. Hamilton asked for no more music; but again Margaret's hands touched the instrument, and this time he listened to the "Last Hope." She did the great composer justice, and her companion forbore compliment.

"Why did you choose this, at this time?" he asked, as he removed the music from the stand. Margaret could not memorize; she was obliged to use her "notes."

"I played for you," she replied. "When one is sorrowful, one likes that best which feeds one's melancholy."

He was well pleased that she had comprehended his mood, yet he said, indifferently:

"I am not sorrowful, but I approve your selection. Like other women, you are prone to believe that when a man is grave, he is sad. My gravity proceeds from thoughtfulness."

"Are you thoughtful, Mr. Hamilton? I should say you were a dreamer."

"I never dream," he replied. "I am a wise man, and have no faith in dreams."

"You are skeptical in all things," said Mrs. Danforth, who had come into the room for a ball of crimson wool and her crochet needles, and thus overheard the last sentence. "That is because you are always in the clouds."

"I thought faith was said to come from the clouds, or heaven—so the pious teach." His tone was a little scornful.

"Faith must be our light
When all else is clouded,"

quoted the lady, as she moved away.

"What good creatures some women prove!" said Margaret. "They have ever a sermon on their tongues' end. But I do not believe our gay hostess intended to sermonize just now—only to turn a sentence prettily." She added, in another tone, and quite abruptly: "How little you must care for my music, after listening to the splendid voice of Constance Langdon! I cannot sing."

His encomiums and thanks were so sincere, and so elegantly worded, that no woman could hear them without a feeling of gratification.

"Do you see much of Miss Langdon? I fancy not."

"Not very much. I have been out little. She has called upon you, of course?"

"Oh! yes—a formal morning visit. She said she would come to spend some evening. Her brother is away, but she would ask Dr. Caxton, who is visiting in the city, to be her escort."

"Did Dr. Caxton come in your train, Miss Courcy?" asked Hamilton, with a smile which did not illuminate his face.

"Not a bit of it. You know that he is engaged to Miss Langdon."

"I did not; and am inclined to believe it an idle report."

"You are very much mistaken, sir; I heard it from good authority. The engagement is to be kept quiet, however; and, indeed, it has existed but a very few weeks, although the Doctor has been a suitor a long time. You look incredulous. I am fearful you have a *penchant* for the young lady. Do you plead guilty?" She smiled archly, as she put the question.

Edward's command of feature was great. He looked her full in the face, as he inquired:

"Do I look guilty?"

"No," was the reply; "and I am glad to know your heart has not gone in that direction. She is a very pretty, nice girl, but would never make you happy—she is so awfully strict. Though everybody makes it the fashion to extol her virtues and charms, for my part I think her as uncharitable as her neighbors."

Miss Courcy paused for some response from her companion. None came. He seemed waiting to hear more, and she pursued :

“She thinks I am past praying for. There is one comfort—she has an equally low opinion of you, and talked very prettily about sparkling wit obscured by clouds of moodiness, fine talents wasted, and noble qualities marred by passionate temper.”

“How very kind to tell me all this, Miss Margaret ! ”

Margaret was puzzled by his manner; she could not understand whether he was ironical, or really pleased by her apparent candor. The reader will perceive that the report of Constance’s words was a clever fabrication from the beginning to the end.

“Perhaps you do not remember,” said Miss Courcy, “a discourse of Miss Langdon’s on friendship, last summer, at Clifton. She has a fine theory concerning that very interesting subject. The friend she describes as an ideal is Dr. Caxton, a little embellished by her fancy, which is very poetic. I was bred to a very proper dread of these wonderful platonic friendships, and always thought the physician would win her. He is a good soul, very amiable, &c., &c. Mrs. Danforth tells me that when he was in M—, last winter, he used to keep Miss Constance supplied with the most lovely bouquets. He returned to New York a little despondent—some say he was rejected. But all is right now. He persevered, and verified the old proverb, ‘Faint heart never won fair lady.’ I do not wonder that she said ‘yes’ at last. Flowers are eloquent pleaders ! ”

"I remember you are fond of flowers, Miss Margaret. When may I have the pleasure of a walk with you to our greatest florist's? You shall choose your own bouquet."

The lady blushed, and thence ensued some lively bantering. Finally an arrangement was made for the projected expedition, which was accomplished a few days afterward; and, from that time until the end of her stay in M——, Miss Courcy was never without flowers, and was possessed of quite a collection of visiting cards marked with the words, "Compliments of Edward D. Hamilton."

"Ah!" thought Margaret, "Maxwell was wrong; the girl has offended him past recall by some stiff propriety. He cares no more for her. Caxton will make her happier, and they will certainly be married some day; so I hardly told a lie—only a truth in advance! If he does love her, it is kindness to prepare him for what must follow."

Margaret never deceived herself by the fancy that Hamilton had transferred his affection to her. She felt that he admired her talent and enjoyed her society, appreciating her conversational powers; and she believed—to use her own words—that "a wise woman can manage a man who is chivalrous to a degree, and who, whatever learning or cleverness he may possess, does not understand a woman's heart."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Unequal fortune
Made him my debtor for some courtesies."

BYRON.

MR. LANGDON's difficulties were daily increasing. The carking cares of poverty were wearing upon Constance, but served to draw her thoughts from herself; and the dark clouds which overhung her family—the absence, as it seemed, of every human aid—forced upon her the *necessity* of faith, and turned from contemplations of the emptiness of earth, to considerations of the power of heavenly aid.

The house in which they lived, and had long rented, was now to be sold by the owner, and the Langdons were looking about for another home, which could never possess the associations of this, when Mr. Langdon learned that Mr. Hamilton had bought the property. He communicated the fact to his family, and the gentle mother immediately conjectured that they would find a kind landlord; while Albert lamented the necessity of being under obligations to an acquaintance, and remarked that it was more agreeable, and less humiliating, to have business dealings with a stranger.

"We should be glad to be able to hope we would not be

turned out by some one who had desired to live in the house, and for that reason had purchased it. At this time it would have proven ruinous to me, had I been obliged to move. Now Hamilton could not, in decency, refuse to rent us the place. I will go to him at once, and settle the matter." Putting on hat and coat, the gentleman sallied forth.

Mr. Hamilton was in his library, when Mr. Langdon was ushered into his presence unannounced. The first meeting was not promising in its results to Mr. Langdon; for, although the new landlord was very civil, and the best seat was given him, and polite inquiries made for his family, there was a certain chilling distance and reserve of manner which annoyed and perplexed him. "The man has not yet forgiven my poor child," thought the father. "Well, I must pity and pardon him." Immediately he entered, without preamble, upon the object of his visit. He was obliged to speak, though ever so lightly, of his pecuniary embarrassments, but with marked reluctance, for he feared that proud, rich man might think he was soliciting a favor. Hamilton was touched, and waived the subject with such delicacy, that his design was not suspected. "I presume, sir," he said, "that you are desirous to continue in the house, which you have so long rented. It has been purchased in my name, but Mr. Helverton is the man to whom you must apply. It is he who will act as your landlord, and I have no doubt he will be most glad to have so desirable a tenant of the property as Mr. Langdon, of whose honor and integrity there can be but one opinion."

Mr. Langdon looked surprised, and, truth to tell, some-
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what relieved. "I understood that you were the purchaser," he said, "and I am sorry to have disturbed you by unnecessary inquiries concerning a matter in which you have probably so little interest."

"The belief was a very natural one," replied Hamilton, courteously. "I imagine it has been generally reported that I am the owner. I am glad, however, of the ability to give you any information which might be of service. I would suggest that you do not immediately call on Mr. Helverton. He is not always accessible at this hour, and you will be certain to find him at his office in the morning."

"Thank you, sir," said the elder gentleman. "I will call upon him early. I will not longer trespass on your time. I trust that your household are quite well?" Mr. Hamilton bowed. "My compliments to Miss Mortimer," added Mr. Langdon. Again Hamilton bowed, and, accompanying his visitor to the door, bade him "good afternoon."

Edward was just reseated in his library, when another gentleman entered, and, greeting him gayly, said :

"I hear you have bought the house in Belmont street, Hamilton. Do me a favor—rent it to me for a friend of mine."

"I am very sorry, but you are too late in your application. It is already rerented to the present tenant. Do not be discouraged; you will be able to procure another equally good. Amuse yourself with a book, my dear fellow, or console yourself with a glass of wine, while I write a business note."

The business note ran thus :

"MY DEAR HELVERTON:

"Mr. Arthur Langdon, an honorable and worthy gentleman, desires to renew his lease of the house No. 41 Belmont street. Let him have it on the easiest terms. I desire the rent to be reduced to \$—, and payable when and how he pleases. He thinks you the landlord. Act the part well. On no account undeceive him. I am his debtor for some kindnesses which are not in my power to repay; and he, like many men in moderate circumstances, has a sensitiveness which must prevent me from doing him, in my own proper person, a favor which he would fancy incurred an obligation. I explain this, that you may not think me whimsical or Quixotic, but just and honorable. I told him the property was bought in my name. Treat the business delicately and skilfully, as I know you can, and oblige

"Yours,

E. D. H."

Spencer was despatched with the note. It is needless to add, that the next day Mr. Langdon informed his family that all arrangements for the lease of the house, and for the payment of the rent, had been most advantageously made, and that their new landlord, Mr. Helverton, was a most generous and noble man.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Darker, wilder grows the night ;
Not a star sends quivering light."

HEMAN.

MARGARET COURCY was in an easy attitude, on a sofa in her father's elegantly furnished drawing room. Her two younger sisters were entertaining, with vivacity, a few evening callers; while by her side was John Maxwell, speaking with an earnestness which was unusual to that man, who generally affected a *blasé* or indifferent manner.

" You are mistaken, Miss Courcy; you think that there is ill feeling between Edward Hamilton and myself. It is not so. It is true, we were once at variance, but that is past. You said that he might visit here this evening; for that reason I am here. You can observe our meeting, and judge if my words are false. Again you are wrong; I know that he loves the lady of whom you have just spoken. He must believe her unalterably, firmly affianced to another, or he will never waver in his attachment. It is only in this way you can influence him."

Maxwell had overshot his mark. Miss Courcy drew herself up haughtily.

"Whether or not I can influence Mr. Hamilton, must be of no concern to Mr. Maxwell, as it is a matter of total indifference to me."

"I beg your pardon," said the gentleman, very lightly. "I did not intend to insinuate that you desired to add his name to your list of conquests. But, knowing how true is the friendship which exists between you, I felt it would be painful to you to know him humiliated, dispirited, and saddened by the rejection of the fair Puritan. A woman's heart is ever pained by the sorrows of a friend!"

"Margaret," said her sister, from the front drawing room, "here is Mr. Hamilton."

Marble could not have been more immovable than the features of Edward, as he was presented in due form to Maxwell. Both men bowed; Maxwell held out his hand.

"I have had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Hamilton before, although he seems to have forgotten me."

The proffered hand was taken, and relinquished; then Alice Courcy, a foolish, flighty, but good-humored girl, called out gayly:

- "How is little Bess, Mr. Hamilton?"

"Thank you, Miss Alice, she is very well."

"Does she have her own way as much as ever?"

The only response was a smile; then the young lady continued saucily:

"How you do spoil her! Times will change, when a Mrs. Hamilton makes her appearance!"

"I think you need not be apprehensive for the comfort of Bessie, Miss Alice."

"Need I not! You will choose some precise piece of propriety and good manners, some time, who will be sure to lecture and scold the poor child from morning till night, on the proper mode of folding her hands, and carrying her head, and holding her tongue!"

"When I feel in need of a wife," was the reply, "I will ask for your assistance in the selection, and quite depend upon your choice. A young lady whose judgment is so accurate, and warnings so well timed, must be capable of prudently advising."

"I was so fortunate as to meet, some years ago, Mr. Hamilton's father," said Maxwell, fastening his brilliant eyes upon Edward; "a humane and noble gentleman, whose treatment of Francis Burton has ever been remarked as most considerate and affectionate. Let us hope, that when his son shall marry, he may find a companion who will treat his sister with the like tenderness!"

Alice Courcy's giddy head was already turned, and she was conversing with her second sister. Margaret was about to inquire "who was Francis Burton?" but checked herself, as she glanced toward Hamilton, and perceived that the white handkerchief he had raised to his mouth was marked with the blood which had come from his compressed and bitten lips. "How trifling is Alice!" she thought. "He is fearfully angry. She might have known he cannot bear jesting about the child." She then called Hamilton to her sofa, and engaged him in such conversation as she thought might soothe his irritation, and interest and please him. She had

apparently been successful in her endeavors, and it was some time before he said :

“ I can remain here but a few moments longer, for even now I should not be surprised to be summoned by a telegram to return to M—— on the night train. In fact, I left word at my hotel where I might be found, should such a despatch arrive.”

“ Miss Mortimer and Bessie are quite well ? ”

“ Yes ; it is only business which would recall me. I have employed a new agent, and he is perpetually getting into difficulties.”

“ Why do you not attend to your own affairs ? You have nothing to do ! ”

“ It is a great deal of trouble, and I am indolent.”

“ It is the last fault of which I should accuse you, Mr. Hamilton ! I should rather consider you chafing under inaction—eager for occupation, restless ; unwearied in the pursuit of your heart’s desire ; courting obstacles, that you might glory in overcoming them ! ”

She had read him well, but he would not acknowledge that she had done so.

“ I need an incentive to exertion. I have none.”

“ For a man, ambition should be sufficient. If I were a man,” she pursued, with kindling eyes, “ I would need no other incentive than the hope of attaining superiority—of reaching an eminence from whence I could look down on all others, and feel that I had gained a name—a lasting name, honor, and reward ! ”

Hamilton thought of Constance, her loveliness and

purity, as he looked on the proud, handsome woman by his side. In his happier days, Constance had spoken with like earnestness ; but her words ever stimulated his desires after something more satisfying and ennobling, and for which he longed, but would not seek. But Margaret's sentences were to him as the faint echo of some vain man's words. He almost sighed, as he replied :

“ And what are honors and renown?—empty and fleeting ! ”

“ You are changed,” she said, bitterly. “ You would not once have spoken thus ! ”

“ And if I am changed, what matter ? ”

“ Why, I say, should you be altered ? Are you so dull and spiritless, that you must sink under disappointment ? Because another has robbed you of a fancied jewel, must you cast aside your aims, your hopes—ay, and your pride and your very manliness ? Be true to yourself, if all the world were false. Be brave. Stand up against misfortune. Let no woman see that she has power to rob you of your birth-right to be great and honored.”

She gave him no time to answer, but rose, and walked toward her sisters and their friends. He could not but follow her, and thus again joined Maxwell. A servant brought a letter to Margaret, which she gave to Hamilton. It was a telegram. He did not look at it, but smilingly remarked :

“ It is my summons. Good-by, Miss Courcy.” They shook hands. “ Good evening, ladies.”

“ Look at it,” said Alice ; “ perhaps you are mistaken.”

Her elder sister repeated her words. He tore open the

envelope, and such a change came over his face, that Margaret was appalled. He dropped the paper into her hand. In another instant he had recovered his self-control.

"It but necessitates my more speedy return," he said, and, bowing, immediately withdrew.

"What is it?" cried all present.

"Bessie has fallen down stairs, and is dying. That is all I can gather," said Miss Courcy, horror stricken and alarmed. She turned to look for Maxwell. He had also disappeared as soon as he knew the purport of the message. He overtook Hamilton speedily.

"Stop!" he hissed into his ear. "Your sister is dying—may even now be dead. Your home is desolate. The woman you worship plighted to another. You have said that you have neither faith in God nor man. Believe in this—a mother's curse. It haunts you *now*; ay, and it ever shall."

"You are revenged," said Hamilton, "if it be revenge you seek. But if, in your cruel breast, there ever dwells one gentle, tender memory of the past, I entreat you, spare me, at this time at least, the manifestation of your bitter hatred—this fierce, malignant rejoicing over my wretchedness."

"You stoop to entreaties—to supplications! You, the proud millionaire with the spotless name! Your pride is humbled," sneered the other. "Listen—— But no; I detain you. Go to your happy home. Go to your household treasure;" and, with a mocking laugh, he left him.

CHAPTER XXX.

" 'Tis gone, that bright and orb'd blaze,
Fast fading from our wistful gaze ;
Yon mantling cloud has hid from sight
The last faint pulse of quivering light."

KEBBLE.

" **MAMMA**," cried Constance, one morning, to her mother, in such accents of woe that Mrs. Langdon hastened down stairs in alarm ; " there has been a terrible accident in Mahdrof avenue. Bessie Hamilton has fallen from the steps, and is fearfully injured. Miss Susan has sent for both of us. *I cannot go. Oh ! then, mamma, if you love me, go immediately !*"

Mrs. Langdon did not hesitate to comply with the request ; thus she learned full particulars of the sad event. The child had been playing at the open door, was dancing gayly on the steps, when her foot slipped, and she fell upon the hard pavement, and Spencer carried her into the house insensible. Hamilton was absent in New York. A telegram had been despatched, yet he could not reach M—— until the following day. In her distress, Miss Mortimer had thought of Mrs. Langdon, so kind and gentle, and of Con-

stance, so tenderly beloved by the child. Physicians were called ; everything was done which could be done ; yet, ere long, fever had set in, and Bessie was raving in delirium. Finding that Mr. Hamilton was absent, the house and servants in confusion, and Miss Susan agonized beyond measure, and that Bessie was continually calling for her brother or for Constance, Mrs. Langdon sent a note to Belmont street ; thus her daughter was speedily in Hamilton's house. As night was closing in, Mrs. Langdon returned home, leaving Constance with Miss Mortimer, who was now more calm, and chiefly disturbed that she had neglected to have her little niece baptized.

"It was her mother's last wish," said Miss Susan ; "yet the babe was so delicate, we always waited until it could be taken to church. Then one thing and another prevented. She was always very shy of strangers, and I hoped that she would grow less fearful. So years went on ; and when, some months ago, I mentioned my desire to Edward, I never saw him more disturbed. He seemed to think, if the child were brought into the Church, he would lose her love ; so wildly he talked, and almost forbade it. So I forbore to press the matter, trusting that he would lose the strange, unnatural fancy. And now—she will die, my darling, and all unblessed ! "

"My dear Miss Susan," said Constance, gently, "it is not too late. I will send a note, by one of the servants, to Mr. Ambrose, or to your own clergyman, Dr. Wilson ; either will come immediately, and the sacrament be administered."

"I would rather Mr. Ambrose would come," said the poor lady, "for Bessie has always loved him."

The note was sent, and Constance tried to soothe Miss Susan's fears, and induce her to hope the little sufferer might yet recover. For herself, she could not believe that the child on which so many hopes were built could be taken from the earth.

Mr. Ambrose did not arrive until very late. Bessie was easier, and almost conscious during the brief service, which was peculiarly solemn in that dimly lighted chamber, where alone the aunt, and Constance and the nurse, knelt beside the priest. When the baptismal rite was ended, when the "few calm words of faith and prayer" had been uttered, and the few "bright drops of holy dew" had been sprinkled on the fair face of the sick child, some prayers from the office for the sick were said, then, for a time, all were silent. The Holy Dove which had descended seemed to pour comfort into each mourning heart, and Mr. Ambrose's few words of consolation tranquillized to calm, and elevated to hope and consolation the sorrowing aunt. The young Christian had for a while gained strength to bear the cross of suffering; she moaned less, and at times would lie quite still, through that long night; but her anxious watchers feared the worst. As morning dawned, she was again restless and wandering in mind, calling for her brother and her aunt by turns, and only recognizing Constance, who could not leave her thus.

Early Mr. Ambrose stopped to make inquiries. Miss Susan could not see him, and for a moment Constance went below to answer his questions, and beg him to leave some

message at her father's. A rope had been thrown across the street, and bark strewed on the stones to prevent the noise of passing vehicles; thus it was that Hamilton entered unexpected by the household. He had travelled all night. His dress was disordered, his aspect wild. He took no notice of Mr. Ambrose, or the servant in the hall, but advanced directly toward Constance. "She is calling for you," was all she said, in answer to his look, for speech he had none. He waited for no more, but would have ascended the stairs, if she had not detained him. She could with difficulty make him understand that they must be prepared for the interview. She went then, promising to send Miss Susan to him. For the first time Hamilton perceived Mr. Ambrose, and the composure of his manner seemed almost like hauteur as he apologized slightly for his deficiency in courtesy. But the clergyman's heart was too much touched by the grief which the young man strove to conceal, to be easily annoyed. There were tears in his kind eyes, as he tried to say some words of hope. "We will trust," he added, "that you may be spared this heavy, bitter trial; but if it be not His will, may He who is the great Comforter support you! For the dear child we cannot grieve, so early called to pass the waves of this troublesome world; and for yourself, Mr. Hamilton, there will be treasure stored in heaven—a magnet to draw your thoughts, to fix your hopes above."

"It is your office, sir," said Hamilton, bitterly, "to offer consolation; it is my misfortune to be incapable of receiving any. You will excuse me, sir; I am much fatigued, and my

anxiety unfits me for conversation. Spencer, show the gentleman into the library; he will find it more comfortable than waiting here." He bowed, and evidently intended to retire to his study, by the door of which they were standing.

"Thank you," said the priest, with quiet dignity; "my errand was but one of inquiry. I have already seen Miss Langdon, and learned all which could be learned of the condition of the little girl, so tenderly endeared to all who knew her. Good morning, sir."

As the door was closed upon Mr. Ambrose, Edward was summoned to Miss Susan.

We will pass over the events of the day. It was evening again. All that medical aid could effect, was done; the physicians had pronounced all hopeless, and Bessie was dying. Mrs. Langdon and another kind neighbor were there, doing all which might be done to soothe Miss Susan, and relieve her care. The aunt was near the couch of the sick child. Hamilton stood at some distance; his face was in shadow, but the outline of his form was distinctly visible. His attitude was almost that of proud defiance.

"Auntie," said Bessie, faintly, "kiss me, auntie." Miss Mortimer stooped over her. "Where is brother?"

He came forward. Constance took the child's hand, which was resting on hers, and placed it on her brother's; but she was not allowed to go. "I want both," said the child. So the little head was rested on her breast, and for a few moments Bessie seemed to sleep. She roused with a start. "It is so dark—so dark!" she repeated. "Brother, so dark!"

"I hold your hand, my darling. I am with you."

"I cannot see you."

"But I am here, although you cannot see me."

She called for Constance. "Sing," she said, "about the darkness, and the tender Shepherd."

Constance hesitated—then sang, in a clear, low voice, the first verse of the simple hymn :

"Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me ;
Bless Thy little lamb to-night ;
Through the darkness be Thou near me,
Watch my sleep till morning light."

Bessie raised her eyes upward, as though she saw a beatific vision, and cried, distinctly, "See ! see ! there is light ! there is no more darkness ! He calls me to the light ! Brother, brother, come ! "

The eyes which closed on earth, opened in Paradise ; the ears which were deaf to the sound of lamentation and bitter weeping, now heard the song of the redeemed ; the lips which had in death proclaimed His might, now joined in the anthems of the blessed. With her "baptismal purity all unsullied," the child had entered into rest.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"My Lord and God, I pray,
Turn from his heart away
This world's tumult;
And lead him to Thy light,
Be it through sorrow's night,
Through pain or toil."

Fouqué's SINTRAM.

IT was Whitsunday morning. The early church bells were ringing. The soft May breezes stole through the opened windows of Constance's own room. Mrs. Langdon met her at the door.

"My dear, I think you had best let Albert take your class at the school, and you should go to Miss Mortimer. She told me, amid her tears, last night, how she looked to you, and begged that you might go to her to-day, if only for a few moments."

"I can go now, mamma, and yet be in time for school."

"You had best not feel hurried. Albert can walk with you to the door, and you can return in time for the service, with your father and with me."

Spencer admitted Constance, and she went directly to

Miss Mortimer's own room. The lady folded her in her embrace.

They talked some time, and Constance could not but observe the resignation of Miss Susan, so perfect, so entire. She understood how great must be the loss which the lady had experienced in the death of the child, which had been her almost constant charge for more than six years.

"We were never parted for a night until last summer," said Miss Susan, simply. "If she had been my own, I could scarcely love her more. I cannot speak of that love as past; it will exist always. Yet I could not wish her here. *There* she rejoices in the sunshine of a love eternal. No false guides, no unfaithful teachers, no unwise, weak, erring friends can ever lead her wrong. Her brief journey is ended. She has found the blissful haven." Yet her tears fell fast. "Her sweet voice I shall hear no more; no longer can I watch her winsome, quaint ways; no longer see the merry face, the fair head, the light of those blue eyes. But oh! I do not wish her here—not for my own sake; yet I tremble when I think of Edward! Constance, if you knew him, you would tremble too!"

Constance stopped her. "Trust him to God."

"But oh! you do not know. He is noble, generous, loving; but he has no faith, no trust."

"Did the daughter of the Canaanitish woman have faith? did she draw near to Christ? Yet for her mother's faith and prayer she was made whole."

"But she was sick—she *could* not come."

"Is his soul well?" cried Constance, with unusual earnestness.

estness. "Does he not need healing? Trust him to the Great Physician. All will yet be well. Believe it, dear Miss Susan, and, like the woman who sought aid for her daughter, do you have faith and prayer."

"I will—I will," said the weeping lady. Then, observing that she looked wearied, Constance persuaded her to try to sleep. Miss Susan at length consented, first begging that her young friend would endeavor to discover if Hamilton was comfortable. "He will let no one come to him," she added; "but you might learn something from Spencer, or the other servants, and give some hints for their guidance. I am afraid I give you great trouble, my dear."

"Oh! no, indeed. I am always glad to do anything for you."

Constance went below. Spencer had been waiting for her at the foot of the stairs. He asked her into the dining room, and closed the door. The account which he gave of Hamilton was not encouraging. He was locked into his study, had remained there all night, and the servant could hear him walking up and down the floor, and sometimes a stifled groan. Now, all was still. Spencer had been to the door several times, but was allowed no admittance, until a few moments before, when he had taken him a note left by Mr. Helverton, volunteering his services at this time, and had thus gained a glimpse of his master's face.

"I darsn't tell Miss Susan what I say to you, miss; but our young lady died in your arms, and I tell you the truth. He 'pears wild and fierce enough for anything. 'Cause Miss Bessie has gone to heaven, he is ready to send himself clean down to hell!"

Constance's heart beat fast. "He would do no harm to himself," she said; "he is no coward."

Spencer looked scared. "The Almighty has sent him a deal, a mighty deal of trouble, and he hasn't no grace to bear it, miss."

"You must have some one here," she said, trembling, and dreading the worst. "This is too horrible. When will this Mr. Helverton be here?"

"Mr. Hamilton was to send him a note."

"When he opens his door, you must go to him, Spencer. You must risk offending him. You must rouse him from this grief."

A female servant at this time came to Miss Langdon. "Mr. Hamilton's breakfast has been waiting hours for him, miss, and I cannot get leave to take it to him. 'Deed, if he fasts this way, he will kill himself!"

"Kill himself!" The words were like the echo of some horrid thought. Constance gave the order for the meal to be brought, and went to the library. It adjoined the study. There she stayed. The door of communication was ere long opened, and she heard Spencer summoned from the ante-room. Now was the time. She beckoned to the woman who brought the tray to take it in. Again she heard Hamilton speak: "Not now, Rachel; take it away. I will ring."

But Constance entered the study. He had dismissed Spencer with the note. She said, gently, and without preamble:

"Miss Mortimer asked me to see if you were comfort-

able. I had ordered Rachel to bring you some coffee, at her desire. Will you let me make it for you?"

He had risen upon her entrance. "Thank you," he said, with such calmness that she was surprised. "I could not trouble you. I have everything I need."

She motioned to Rachel to remain. "It is no trouble," she said, and commenced to pour out the coffee. He bowed mechanically, and tasted it, as he received it from her hand. Spencer was right; Hamilton's appearance was, in truth, terrible. He looked years older than when she had last seen him, and there was a fierce yet despairing glance in his eyes, which alarmed her. She had removed her bonnet, that she might look less like a stranger. She had brought some freshness, some life into that room of dread and darkness. The suddenness of her presence had for a moment changed the current of his thought—but for a moment only; then flowed on the bitter, brackish flood.

"Miss Susan is much troubled for your sake," said Constance. "Could you not go to her for a few minutes? Together you could mourn, together find comfort, united, as you are, in sympathy and sorrow."

He seemed not to hear, and she repeated her question.

"I will go—I will go," he said, "for the last time."

He had left the room, and Constance followed. Something seemed to whisper, "Do not leave him now." They ascended the stairs. As they reached the door of the room where the quiet sleeper lay, she observed him shudder. Then he turned to her, as he entered that darkened chamber, and said, sternly: "Leave me with my dead."



He had closed the door, and Constance stood without, trembling, fearful, oppressed with sickening dread. She waited not long. Her hearing, sharpened by her fears, enabled her to hear, repeated in a voice of exquisite pathos, the tender, endearing names by which he had called the child in life; and then—"My darling, yet you cry, 'Come!' I come. In this world of darkness, for me joy and hope are alike gone. In the unknown land, *all* is blotted out; ay, even cursing. I follow you. I—" There was a pause, and Constance remained as if rooted to the spot. "Not here," she heard again; "not here, O spotless and pure! no deed of violence here. Yet I follow you—soon, ay, soon!". The lock moved. Hamilton emerged from the room, and would have rushed past her, but her detaining hand was upon his arm. She drew him back into the apartment from whence he came, even to the very couch. He had not removed the covering from the face of the child; he had not dared to look upon those features. It was Constance who disclosed them to his sight. On the countenance of Bessie rested perfect peace. A smile was on the lips; the childlike face wore no trace of emaciation or disease; the little hands rested tranquilly on her breast; it seemed as if she had fallen asleep, and that her dreams were sweet. The brother and the friend stood still; a feeling of awe stole over them, and for a time neither spoke. With a detaining hand yet upon his arm, Constance looked on Hamilton. The grief-stricken heart was subdued; the lofty head was lowered; he was weeping as man only weeps. Gone was the

unnatural calmness, gone the fearful gloom. Constance no longer feared ; she believed.

“She is gone—gone !” said Constance, and her voice sounded like the echo of some distant music. “She cried, ‘Brother, come.’ You will go ; you will seek the Light to lead you to the way that she has gone. That way is dark, gloomy, sad ; but a Hand can uphold you, and guide you, though you *see* it not ; even as your hand held hers, when her eyes were blinded by the shades of death. As you were with her, although unseen, even so the presence of One, mighty to save, can dwell near you, albeit invisible. In your ear there ever sounds the echo of that sweet, childish voice, saying, ‘He calls me to the light. There—there is light !’ *There*, where sorrow cannot enter ; *there*, where weariness is unknown ; *there*, where truth is made clear in the illumination of His knowledge ; *there*, the land of the blest ! But here, the land of strife, temptation, doubts. Yet He has come—He who is the Light. For you,” and her look became more elevated, her tones almost prophetic, “for you, earth shall be no longer a dreary, darksome wild, when He who is the Light shall go before and lead you.”

Hamilton looked upon her. The sunlight stealing through the half-opened door, rested on her snowy drapery, illuminated her whole form ; it encircled her head ; it bathed her face. She stood irradiated by its glorious beams.

“Bessie calls you,” Constance repeated yet again ; “she calls you. Can you fail her ? Can you leave unsought the way which leads to her, to rest, to joy ?”

The sunlight stealing through the half-opened door now

rested on the white covering of the child ; it rested on the pure face ; it tinted the brown ringlets with gold. Constance withdrew her hand from his arm, and stepped backward. Thus the sunlight, stealing through the half-opened door, enveloped for an instant that tall, erect form with heavenly radiance ; it enlightened the pale, stern features. But a cloud passed over the sun ; the momentary gleam had fled.

“It will come again,” she murmured to herself, as she softly closed the door upon the sleeping sister and the sorrowing brother. “I no longer fear ; I believe.”

“He is with Bessie,” she said, simply, in answer to Miss Susan’s queries, when she went to say “good-by.” “Go to him now ; let your first meeting be there.”

The sermon was over ; the prayer for the Church militant was being said, as Constance entered St. Thomas’s chapel. The fragrance of the Whitsuntide flowers pervaded the air. The comfort of the Whitsuntide feast was dwelling in her heart, as she knelt to receive His gifts. Fed by that food, there was distilled into her soul the fulness of faith and hope and love.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"It swings and rings, the old church bell,
Fast for wedding, and slow for knell.
Which is the best—can any tell?"

GITCHELL.

THE child had passed away while the spring flowers bloomed. One month had elapsed. The anemones had faded, and the roses were come. The house in Mahdrof avenue, which had once reëchoed with sounds of joy, was closed and desolate. Miss Mortimer was in Clifton, living at Haylands, and Hamilton was in Europe. He made few adieux. Not even to Constance did he give the opportunity to say "good-by." The people of M—— were not surprised to learn of his departure. Unmarried and homeless, he had no ties to bind him to the country; it was but natural he should seek change and diversion by a foreign tour. But Constance thought of him with hope. The cloud which had darkened earth, might direct his thoughts to heaven. Sorrow might prove a mighty teacher of his soul. Thus, amid her mourning for the loss of the dear child, and for his grief, she trusted for him, and her heart was gladdened.

As the period for Mona's marriage approached, she was

sent for from Waverley. She would willingly have remained at home, but she had no right openly to mourn with Edward Hamilton. That right she had relinquished; he could be nothing to her now. Thus she went to Clifton, resolved that her gravity should not cloud Mona's joy.

The night before her cousin's marriage, Constance retired earlier than usual to her room. After an hour passed in quiet, her door opened, and Mona entered.

"You naughty child!" she said; "I knew I should find you up, though you said you needed rest."

"Rest from talking, Mona—not from thought. I wanted to be alone."

"That means, I have no right to disturb your privacy. Good night."

As she turned away, Constance noticed that she looked disappointed. "Come back, fairy; I never mind you. Sit beside me on this cushion, and we will have our good-by talk."

Mona returned readily, and rested her sunny head against her cousin; but she would not talk of the future, bright as it should seem to her, nor of the past, and their happy childhood, but of the present and its frivolities, and so lightly and carelessly, that Constance despaired of winning her to any serious thoughts of the new life and duties upon which she would enter on the morrow. Yet, when the striking of the hall clock warned them that they must part, Mona still lingered. "She hated clocks," she said; "they reminded her of time; she had wasted so much, she would rather forget."

"Not forget, dear Mona, but remember to redeem."

"Constance, you have a sweet voice; do you think that is the reason I do not rebel against your lecturing?"

"But I am not lecturing; I only say such things because I love you, and wish you to be happier."

"Happier in remembering all sorts of solemnities! I should be stupid, then. You are not stupid, but you are grave sometimes, and gravity suits your face. It does not mine. No; I must be gay and laughing always, for it is my nature. And some one," and here the bride elect blushed prettily, "some one, who shall be nameless, protests against my seriousness."

Her cousin sighed involuntarily. This strange, cold man, who was to be the husband of this light-hearted child, would he never weary of her gayety? would he never bring a shadow on that bright face? Mona looked annoyed, almost as if she had read her thoughts.

"There must be no sighs to-morrow, Constance," and there was some imperiousness mingled with her pettishness; "I cannot have you grave then. Be what you like when I am gone, but, while I am here, you must forego sighing, and indulge in smiling."

"I will," was the answer. "I did not mean to grieve you now."

Mona had risen, and moved away. She came back again. "My dear," she said, and her lips trembled a little, "you never grieve me. I love you very much, Constance. Good-by."

"Not 'good-by,'" returned the other, cheerfully, "only 'good night.'"

"Yes, 'good-by,'" persisted Mona; "I shall make no farewells to-morrow."

Constance put her arm caressingly about the little figure. "We have been loving cousins, my darling; we will always love each other. Good night, good-by, and God be with you."

The bright blue eyes filled with tears. "You will say a little prayer for me sometimes, Constance? I am very silly, but I shall like to think you would."

"I never forget you, Mona, at the best times. I never will."

"Thank you. Do not tell any one how foolish I have been; it is all over now;" and thus the cousins parted.

A long line of carriages were drawn before the beautiful church of Clifton. The bells sent forth a "merrie peal" as the bridal train emerged from the porch. The young, happy bride's golden hair and pretty face is half concealed by her flowing veil, and the elegant bridegroom's face is wreathed with smiles. The pair who follow next in order are Constance and Dr. Caxton; the second bridesmaid is Mary Stanley, with Mr. Egerton. Margaret Courcy follows, attended by Mr. Glenn, who never said a witty thing, and never did a wise one, and was of no importance to anybody. He was presentable looking, and carried a long purse, well filled. For this last, excellent, and *weighty* reason, he is made known to the reader.

We describe the wedding in the words used by Mr. Glenn, during the reception:

"It is a splendid affair. Everybody who is anybody, is here. The company are elegantly dressed, and the bride looks lovely; nobody can come within six yards of her, her dress is so long. (By the way, how graceful those trains are!) The bridal gifts are magnificent, and very costly. I mean to make an estimate of their probable value. I declare, it is enough to make a man wish for his own wed-ding!"

"Do you really think, Mr. Glenn, that the beauty of those gifts could make you seriously contemplate the awful step of matrimony?"

"Well, I can't say, Miss Langdon. I said, yesterday, I had no more idea of marrying, than of swallowing myself; but now I see so many beautiful women, and witness Maxwell's happiness, I am ready to sacrifice myself on the altar of Hymen!"

"You are in a dangerous state, sir," began Dr. Caxton, but he was interrupted by Mr. Egerton.

"There is nothing so intoxicating as bliss," remarked the latter gentleman. "To my excited fancy, the wedding ring is suggestive of a round of unending enjoyments; its plainness is emblematic of the simplicity of domestic joys; and the pure gold denotes the purity and genuine value of that same domestic felicity!"

"'Pon my word, that is put very well, sir!" exclaimed the brilliant Glenn. "I do not appreciate quiet home dinners, or dull talk between two people from one week's end to another; but I like figures of speech, sir. 'Pon my word, Mr. Egerton, you ought to be a member of Congress! Don't you think so, Miss Langdon?"

"After such a pretty speech, I think Mr. Egerton deserves a better fate. I would not vote for him."

The three gentlemen laughed.

"Well, now, you *are* hard on Congressmen, Miss Langdon; and you remind me of a subject which I was discussing the other day. I think women ought to be allowed to vote. We would not have so many queer dicks among the representatives of the people, if women were allowed a voice in the matter. I know a great many clever women, that know a mighty deal more than some men. Honestly, I do."

"You are flattering my sex, Mr. Glenn."

"Oh, no! not at all. It is all deserved praise. Why, a great many ladies can talk better—more glibly—about politics, than you think; and, really, I have known girls just out in society, who know all about the British classics, and who wrote Homer's *Iliad*, and could discourse as learnedly as *Cleopatra*, or any other of those Greek women!"

"Or any other of those *Greek* women!" repeated Mr. Egerton, with distressed eyebrows. "Yes, we understand."

Constance played with her bouquet, and kept her face out of sight. Dr. Caxton beat a retreat. A young lady near, who had seen some seventeen years, and was elated by the delights of her "coming out," continued the subject:

"I do not like those awfully learned women, Mr. Glenn. Do you, Miss Langdon? I like somebody to laugh and dance and talk nonsense. Those blue-stockings are good for nothing!"

"You are quite right, Miss Jenny," remarked Mr. Egerton. "A woman, to be a true woman, should know

how to make sponge cake and grape jelly! 'Cleopatra, and those *other Greek* women, never did that!"

"Can you make sponge cake, Miss Langdon?"

"Yes, Mr. Glenn; and cocoanut pudding, too, which is a greater art."

"I always said," responded Mr. Glenn, "that when I met a lady who could make a good cocoanut pudding, provided she was neither old nor ugly, I would propose on the spot."

Constance folded her hands demurely, and stood in an attitude of patient waiting.

"Dear me," lisped Miss Jenny, "Miss Langdon ought to blush."

"Don't hesitate, man," said Mr. Egerton. "I want to know how the thing is done. We will hope Miss Langdon will receive it with the dignity of 'Cleopatra, and those other *Greek* women."

There was a smile on every face, and Glenn began to suspect he was being quizzed. He looked confused.

"No matter," said Constance, trying to look grave. "You need not think it obligatory, in this instance, to perform your vow, Mr. Glenn. I will excuse you very willingly."

Mr. Glenn could see through this joke, and his face brightened pleasantly. "A great deal too willingly, I am afraid."

"That is all very well for you to say now, sir, after having very plainly intimated that you considered me both 'old and ugly,' for you did not 'propose on the spot.'"

The gentleman eagerly disclaimed any such intention; but Constance continued to tease him not a little, by charging him with too great frankness; and she appeared so very charming in her handsome dress, with her face brilliant and smiling, that Mr. Egerton might have been pardoned for imagining her a coquette.

"Did you ever write verses, Miss Langdon? Can you do that as well as you do everything else?"

"As I make cocoanut puddings and grape jellies, for instance? Come, Mr. Egerton, this questioning must be discontinued. One would think you gentlemen down-Easters. I 'guess' you are—I 'calculate' you must be Yankees. I should 'admire' to know!"

Messrs. Egerton and Glenn laughed; and some others now joined the group which surrounded Miss Langdon.

"Why are not the Fairfaxes here?" inquired some one.

"They have lost a cousin," answered Constance, with marked gravity. "Bessie Hamilton, of M—, a niece of Mrs. Fairfax."

"Oh! the sister of that tall man—I remember," said Miss Jenny. "They were at Clifton, last summer. I suppose this accounts for the appearance of Carrie in mourning, the other day."

"That 'tall man' is a millionaire, Miss Jenny," said Mr. Egerton; "that accounts for the mourning dress. Cousins do not generally assume it."

"I know they—the Fairfaxes, I mean—were all invited to the wedding," chattered the young girl, "for I was here,

one evening, with *Mona*, and saw *Mr. Maxwell* address an invitation to *Mr. Lionel* with his own hand."

It was even so. That amiable man, ever delighting in the misery of another, had endeavored to induce *Mona* to address *Fairfax's* note, but she had sufficient heart remaining to prevent her from thus insulting her rejected lover. *Maxwell* had made a show of intimacy with *Dr. Caxton*, of late, that he might have a good reason for selecting him for his chief groomsman, knowing that *Constance* would of course be first of *Mona's* attendants; thus *Hamilton* would again hear their names connected, and receive a fresh stab of jealousy.

Hamilton had sailed for Europe just one week before *Miss Harcourt's* marriage. He heard of the event first, through a letter from *Miss Mortimer*, who was now a resident at *Haylands*.

Before her return home, *Constance* called upon *Miss Susan*. The meeting was entirely cordial. *Edward* was quite himself, she said, and very considerate for her comfort, and thoughtful for others. He had arranged his affairs perfectly. She could not tell when he would return—probably not to remain permanently for some years, although he had half promised to pay her a visit the following spring.

Mrs. Fairfax made many inquiries about the wedding. "I am very sorry I could not be there," she said. "No doubt *Miss Mona* looked lovely, and shed the requisite amount of tears (imagine, *Susan*, *Titania* weeping!), and *Mr. Maxwell* was of course smiling. Bridegrooms always are

goodnatured. Be assured, Miss Langdon, for two months your cousin will be very happy; her trousseau will be in good order, the bridal parties frequent, and the wedding gifts have the freshness of novelty. Oh! I must not neglect to ask how you like your new cousin, Mr. Maxwell?"

Miss Mortimer looked a little shocked at her sister's questioning, but was evidently curious to hear the answer.

"Mona is very happy, and her husband is very attentive. I can scarcely say I know him, I have seen so little of him."

"I have just thought who he resembled in appearance," went on Mrs. Fairfax. "Did you ever see him, Susan? He looks like Edward Hamilton. Do you not think so, Miss Langdon?"

"Oh! no, no!" cried Constance, earnestly.

"He cannot," said Miss Susan, quite annoyed. "Edward looks exactly like his father."

"What difference does that make? What has his father to do with a casual resemblance to Mr. Maxwell? Begging your pardon, Susan, Miss Langdon's new cousin is much handsomer!"

Mrs. Fairfax was infinitely amused by Miss Mortimer's evident vexation. "Edward is considered a very fine-looking man."

"I am not depreciating your idol, when I assure you that Mr. Maxwell is something extraordinary! To be sure, he is not six feet two or three inches, and has not great gray eyes, and does not look so marvellously intellectual as to frighten people out of their five senses, nor so——"

"Oh, Jane! indeed you are caricaturing now. You

know Edward is sufficiently gay, when he has nothing to trouble him ! ”

“ You need not remind me of his gayety, my dear ! When he has stayed here for a week, Carrie and Pierre are generally beyond control ; and he has kept Mr. Fairfax so long in the dining room, laughing, and telling anecdotes, that verily the whole order of the establishment has been disarranged ! ”

Miss Susan saw she was being teased, so she gave no sign of pique, and Mrs. Fairfax soon desisted. After some conversation, which enlivened Miss Mortimer, Constance took her leave. Carrie met her on the lawn, and walked with her to the gate. She talked incessantly of Hamilton, how he looked in his sombre dress, and how he had remained but two days at Clifton. “ But he took me out driving, Miss Constance, and I had such a nice talk with him ! It was my thirteenth birthday, and he gave me a beautiful little watch, with my name engraved upon it ; ” and Carrie pulled it out, to be admired by her friend. “ He told me all about Paris and Italy, until I wondered why he went, when he knew so much already, and had been abroad before.”

“ What did he say ? ” inquired Constance.

“ He laughed a little, and said he was not too wise to learn much yet. Aunt Susan told me not to mention Bessie’s name to him ; but when he asked me what he should send me, I told him to bring himself home. He repeated ‘ home ’ in such a strange way, I could not help saying, ‘ Oh ! cousin Edward, I am so sorry that you have no little Bess now ! ’ He is very gentle to us, and never scolds children ;

so I was frightened to hear him say, sharply and sternly, 'Hush !' After a while he drew me closer to him, and bent down to kiss me on the forehead ; so I knew he was not angry."

"There is your brother, Carrie," said Constance ; "will you ask him to come to speak to me ?"

Lionel came through the trees, and shook hands with some appearance of cordiality. He was too proud to evidence any wounded feeling.

"Very glad to see you, Miss Langdon. I congratulate you on your new cousin. How is Mrs. Maxwell ?"

"Ever so far away," replied the unconscious Constance ; "ever so far away, on her wedding tour. I am going home in a few days. Will you come to see me before I leave Waverley ?"

"Thank you ; I should be very happy to see you, Miss Constance. When you write to Miss Mona—I mean the fair bride—convey to her my kindest wishes. I have no doubt she is very happy, and will continue so ; her temper is equable, and she is not given to change."

He had betrayed himself by his sarcasm ; and Constance's "good-by" was the more cordial, because she could feel for his pain and forgive his pride.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"It swung and rung, that old church bell,
Fast for wedding, and slow for kneil.
Which was the best—can you *now* tell?"

J. C. GITCHELL.

MONA MAXWELL was seated in her handsome breakfast room. The bright light of a sea-coal fire was reflected on the crimson hangings of the walls and windows. The round table was adorned with rich silver; the china was of the finest and purest; yet the young wife looked on the comfort and elegance which surrounded her with indifference. Her face was not beaming with smiles as usual; her hair hung in heavier ringlets on her dark dress. Time had wrought changes. Two years before, her brow was unclouded; now it wore an expression of thoughtfulness, which added to her beauty, giving to her countenance a character which had been lacking once. She performed her duties with a careless grace. Her husband sat opposite. His brilliant features were clouded, and he found fault with the coffee and read his paper by turns.

"James," said the lady to the servant, "pass the sugar bowl to Mr. Maxwell. My dear," she continued, with her

gay laugh, "I hope you will not think I intimate that your temper needs sweetening." He did not reply. "Do you find the paper very interesting?" she inquired.

"Very," he answered, dryly. "There are two graphic accounts of as many murders, two or three letters from lying foreign correspondents, and an intimation of the probable rise of stocks, in which property holders like yourself will of course be interested." He handed her the paper with a sarcastic bow, as he pushed aside his plate, and walked to the fireplace.

"I have not nearly finished my breakfast," she said, with a faint smile. "You are a model of politeness, to leave me alone!"

"Models of politeness are always heartless, my love. My great affection forbids me to treat you as a stranger!"

She affected not to observe his irony, and, rising, went to his side. "Are you going out?" she asked. "It is but little after nine o'clock; the day will be so long with you away. I am so lonely."

"Take a drive with the child; that will pass the morning."

"But it is such a cold, raw March day, and Dr. Jonson says baby is not strong."

"Then go without her. Pay some visits; talk gossip with your acquaintances. Women are in their element then."

Mona pouted like a child. "How long you are clearing the table," she said, pettishly. "James, make haste!" She threw herself into a chair, as the servant closed the door, and commenced her complaint.

"I think you are very unkind to-day ; you treat me very rudely. You do not like me any more." Maxwell never turned his head, but stood watching the fire. "You never have cared for me since papa refused to accede to your plans. I cannot help it, if he does not choose to invest his property as you desire. You ought to be very glad that baby will be so rich, and that our allowance is so large, we never can be troubled."

"Bah!" was the amiable reply. "Do not talk of *our* income. You know that it is all yours ; that your father hates me, and does not mean I shall touch anything."

"I thought you liked me for myself, not for my money," sobbed Mona.

"Your handkerchief is prettily embroidered, your hand very small and white, and you enact the part of an injured wife to perfection ; only my capacity does not allow me to appreciate the character. I never could love a Niobe ; so oblige me by checking your tears."

"I think you are very ungrateful," pursued the unwise Mona. "I gave up a great deal for you."

"You mean, you relinquished Fairfax for me. I have no doubt but that, if you were left an interesting young widow, he would willingly become a second time your suitor. How would you advise me to rid you of myself—by taking strychnine, or blowing my brains out ?"

"If you have any feeling," said Mona, indignant, hurt, and sorrowful, "do not speak so frightfully. How can you be so cruel, when you know my whole heart is bound up in you ?"

Mr. Maxwell consulted his watch before replying :

" I am glad to be assured of the strength and depth of your affection ! It has stood the wear and tear of almost two years of wedded life. Truly, *your* name should have been Constance ! " There was a smile on his lip, and the young wife's head was bent lower. " When is your cousin to visit you ? " he went on. " Your paragon of excellence will be a consoler to you, when you have been a sufferer from the cruel words of your husband."

" Constance will not be here until April," said Mona, in a low voice.

" How unfortunate ! To change the painful subject, perhaps you can tell me when Edward Hamilton is expected by the Fairfaxes."

" I do not know."

" He will never return, to remain permanently," cried Maxwell. " He is a wanderer for life ; he has no home—none ; he is worse than an outcast ! "

The words were uttered with such vehemence that Mona started. " How fearful," she exclaimed, involuntarily, " is the hate you bear that man ! "

" Hate ! " repeated her husband, fiercely. " No language can express my enmity for him and his. It has grown with my growth ; it increases day by day ; it is nourished, fostered by every desire of my heart." He stopped, for something in the white, startled face of his wife alarmed him. " What is it ? " he asked.

" Why should you feel so toward him ? " she faltered. " For Heaven's sake, do not look again as you looked just now ! "

"Nonsense!" he said, in an altered voice. "When one man has insulted another, and then shot him down, one is not likely to forget the insult, or love one's enemy."

The nurse entered at this time, with a babe, so pretty, healthy, and bright, it were no marvel that even Maxwell's face lost its vindictive expression, and softened to strange beauty as he turned to his child. His child—his; the one creature in all the wide world toward whom his hardened heart yearned with tenderness. But the infant cried when he would have caressed her, and stretched forth her tiny hands to her mother. He could have struck *Mona*, in his jealous anger, as he saw her hushing her babe within her arms; but he controlled himself by an effort, and left the room.

His prophecy of the future of *Mona* was already fulfilled—she was no longer "her own mistress." Loving her husband with a blind idolatry, her sole earthly hope, aim, and desire was to gain his affection; yet she knew him more estranged day by day. She strove to hide her unhappiness from her parents, lest they might guess its cause. To the world, Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell seemed a well-matched pair, possessed of all which could conduce to comfort and elegance. Certainly, the gentleman did not spend all his evenings at home, but frequented his clubs still; yet he was considered to have been very fortunate in marrying an heiress, although "a girl brought up as *Miss Harcourt* had been could not prove a model wife." Since the birth of her child, *Mona* had gone out less and less into society, and persons remarked "it was astonishing that coquettes sometimes settled down into such exemplary *mammas*."

Mr. Harcourt's antipathy to his son-in-law had increased. They had several angry altercations, which might have terminated in serious quarrel, had not the affection of the one for his daughter disposed him to conciliation, and the consideration of the other for the influence and property of his father-in-law obliged him to alter his deportment.

April sunshine came, and with it came Constance and her less varying sunshine to Mona. Even Maxwell felt her influence, and, in her presence, forbore to torture his wife by bitter sarcasms or cruel sneers. She had guessed at the unhappiness of Mona, and did all she could to preserve between the miserable pair at least the semblance of harmony. Yet even this was a difficult task, and Constance longed for the power to speak to her cousin, and tell her of her sympathy, and comfort her heart. But Mona kept her secret; she made no confidante. Cruelly as she had trifled with Lionel Fairfax, regardless as she had been of his pain, now, at last, she proved herself a true woman. She would endure all, but would make no complaint of her husband. Her lips never uttered words of blame. Through all, she was unchanged in faithfulness and love toward him.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Fops take a world of pains
To prove that bodies can exist *sans* brains."

PARK BENJAMIN.

DR. CAXTON was ever welcomed by the Maxwells during the time of the visit of Constance in the great city. They had been friends so long, and the young lady's heart had been so preoccupied, that she never dreamed of any warmer sentiment than friendship existing in the heart of the Doctor. Thus, free alike from prudishness or coquetry, she treated him with perfect ease. He was as her older brother, and he never seemed so happy as when she called him by that familiar title. Mr. Glenn was becoming as attentive as the adopted brother, but was not received with like cordiality by Miss Langdon. Perhaps Constance did not know herself; perhaps the Doctor did not truly read his own heart; certain it was, when Mona informed him that her cousin carried his bouquets to her room, or used them to decorate the *boudoir* of Mrs. Maxwell, where the ladies usually spent their mornings, he felt more than a fraternal delight in a sister's partiality, and viewed with much pleasure the elegant exotics of Mr. Glenn alone adorning the parlors. Mr. Glenn suddenly

ceased to frequent those parlors, or to honor Miss Langdon with gifts of flowers. The following circumstance explains the cause: Constance, being one afternoon quite alone, when Mona was in the nursery, stole quietly to the music room, to enjoy what school-girls term "a good practice." But she was not in the mood for practising, and, strangely enough, she could but play those old airs and sing those sweet songs which brought all the past to mind; which made her forget the present, and take no thought for the future. She closed her music books; she played but from memory. Again she softly touched the keys of the instrument, and those keys unlocked some hidden treasures of her soul; her heart alone guided her hand. The strangely sweet, *sad* sounds ceased; some exultant angel now breathed *hope* in other chords. Constance rose, and walked into the drawing rooms.

By a table stood Mr. Glenn. His first words were a compliment.

"You play magnificently—really you do! Upon my honor, now, Miss Langdon, I never heard the like!"

Poor Constance! It was a sorry fact, but the sight of that man, so elaborately attired, with hair parted down the middle, and waxed mustaches, put every tender, poetic sentiment to flight; all the romance of her maiden fancies was dispelled.

"I hope you will give me some music. I like something more lively than this new piece you played—something brisk and noisy!"

Constance thought Mr. Glenn had never been so unin-

teresting ; but she walked straight to the piano, dashed off the gayest polka she knew, and asked, with a laugh, " Does that suit your taste ? "

Mr. Glenn was no judge of music ; but the lady looked very pretty as she laughed, so he expressed himself pleased, and selected, after overturning a pile of music, a song with the sentimental title, " Ever of thee I am fondly dreaming."

" That is what I am doing, " remarked the gentleman, when the singing was ended. " I am always fondly dreaming of you, Miss Constance."

She looked up, and saw, with surprise, that the man was regarding her attentively, although with perfect composure. Was it possible he meant to address her ? was the idea which flashed across her mind. She pretended not to have heard him, and began talking of some trifling matter, as she meditated a speedy escape from the apartment. But he was not to be diverted from his purpose.

" I have meant to tell you this for a long time, Miss Langdon, " pursued the lover, without any apparent trepidation, but a certain business-like air. " You are very handsome, and I am not the kind of man to care about money. I have a good deal of my own, and all I want in a wife is good looks and good manners. I have always been used to good society, and I want a woman who will preside well over my house. My family are very respectable, you know, and I should not like them to blush for me. They have long desired that I should marry, and the more I saw of you, the more I felt your superiority to other women. Thus I have determined to ' offer you my hand and heart. ' "

As he concluded, in the old established formula, Constance replied. She had been too much confounded by his assurance, to interrupt him ; yet now, controlling her temper, she said :

“ I am grateful for your good opinion, Mr. Glenn, but it is impossible for me to accept your hand.”

He evinced a little uneasiness, as he said, hurriedly, before she could finish her sentence :

“ Oh ! but you are not in earnest. Why, just consider——”

“ I am quite in earnest, sir, and must beg you to discontinue the subject. It is an unpleasant one to me.”

“ Oh ! but that is impossible. You are poor, you know ; and, although I am not very learned or talented, or that sort of thing, I am *rich*. I care very much for you. I am worth more than three hundred thousand dollars. I can give you an establishment finer than this, and everything heart can desire. Such an offer as this is not to be had every day. Men are now looking everywhere for heiresses,” continued Mr. Glenn, growing angry, as he observed the indignant expression of Constance’s face.

She rose, and drew herself to her full height. “ I am not to be bought with your fortune, sir. My price is a greater sum than Mr. Glenn can offer. Your proposal, far from honoring me, is but an impertinence ; an impertinence which I am not prepared to accept, and which will effectually put an end to our future intercourse. Good afternoon, sir.”

She had made her escape ; and Mr. Glenn watched the

last graceful wave of her dress, as she vanished through the doorway, and heard her light footstep ascending the last step of the stairs, before he had sufficiently recovered from his astonishment to take his departure. His surprise was greater than that of Constance at the result of their interview, for she had always been aware of his melancholy deficiency in the article of brains, and his unbounded confidence in himself; and he had never believed, until that eventful day, that any woman could be so devoid of good taste and discretion, as to reject a man of such consequence and wealth as Arthur Wellesley Glenn!

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Meekly she bowed her head, and murmured,
‘Father, I thank Thee !’"

EVANGELINE.

"MR. HAMILTON is returned from Europe, and is at Haylands," announced Dr. Caxton, during a pause in the conversation at Mr. Maxwell's dinner table. Mona looked uneasily toward her husband, but he went on with his carving unconcernedly. "He has been absent a long time," pursued the Doctor, now addressing his remarks to Constance. "I suppose he will be gladly welcomed in M——."

"He will be," replied Constance, calmly; "he is highly esteemed there."

Maxwell looked up. There was no deeper flush on her cheek; there was no added light in her eyes. He secretly rejoiced. "He has lost her," he thought. "My revenge is complete." The subject was dropped, and a new topic of conversation started by Dr. Caxton. When dinner was over, Mr. Maxwell excused himself, and went out; in fact, this was his habit. He rarely honored his house with his presence after six o'clock in the evening. The ladies and their guest adjourned to the parlors, and Mona said :

"Your broken ring is mended, Constance. I brought it home this morning. Here it is."

It was the peculiar ring with the device of an anchor, which Hamilton had returned to her three years before. It had belonged to Constance, and she had given it to her lover, after having the new motto, "Conquer thyself," engraved upon it, in allusion to a conversation regarding some trait of his character. When their engagement was dissolved, he had desired to retain this trinket, and she had permitted him, saying, "It is the pledge of a friendship which no time can change." When Margaret Courcy had extorted from Constance her ideal of a perfect friend, Hamilton, in his blind anger, had returned the ring to its rightful owner, wilfully distorting the meaning of the motto. Now, as Constance opened the case, and looked on that memento of the past, thoughts bitter and painful crowded to her mind. She was not mourning the lover; she was mourning over the erring, the benighted, so sadly alone. The Doctor's voice roused her.

"Is it a love charm, Miss Constance, that you hold it so closely? Ah, I see—it is a gentleman's ring." He took it from her, and slipped it on his own finger.

"Take it off," she said; "I wish to put it away."

"And I want to wear it," he persisted. "Come, be generous. Let me have it for one evening." He had been in jest, but she shook her head so seriously that he was now in earnest. "Tell me its story," he said, inquisitively.

"It is too long, and—too dreary." She looked so very grave, he was surprised.

"Dreary, when the motto is *L'Esperance*—hope! How cold the evening grows!" He walked away with the ring to the window.

"It is not cold," said Mona, smiling; "but you grow superstitious over that ring. One might imagine you two children, who had been reading ghost stories. Constance, put away that forlorn face, and brighten up a bit."

Thus entreated, Constance was herself, only more gay, perhaps, than usual. It is easier to go from one extreme to another, than to pursue the happy middle course, whether in words or deeds.

"You have your rehearsals for Mrs. Baxter's tableau party to-night, have you not?" said Mona, after an hour or more had passed.

"No, indeed," cried her cousin, exultingly. "I am released to-night. Mrs. Baxter is not very well; the rehearsal is postponed until next Tuesday. I do not believe I was ever so selfishly glad to learn of any one's indisposition."

"Then, although it appears rather inhospitable to turn you out, Doctor, I wish you would take Miss Langdon to Mrs. Marvin's, to spend an hour this evening. We owe her ever so many visits, and I want my cousin to convey to her some especial message."

The Doctor readily agreed to do Mrs. Maxwell's bidding, and the two friends reached Mrs. Marvin's house in very good spirits. There were several visitors in the parlor, and the conversation was general. Remarks were made upon the society of different cities. One gentleman, advanced in years, and evidently a clergyman, was often appealed to by

some member of the circle; and Constance observed him with interest, for he appeared very retiring in manner, and, although he spoke well, spoke but rarely. At length the city of M—— was mentioned, and the clergyman seemed to evidence more interest. He said he had not visited it for some years, then made several inquiries concerning its society and people.

"Here is a young lady who can enlighten you, for M—— is her native place," said Mrs. Marvin, looking toward Constance; then immediately added: "The Rev. Mr. Dorrington, Miss Langdon."

They were almost side by side, so their conversation went on undisturbed, for the rest of those present were soon scattered about the rooms, chatting in a desultory manner, and looking over prints and books. Mr. Dorrington was well pleased with his young companion's description of her beloved city, and he soon discovered that they had much in common. She told him of the clergy, and schools, and parish work, as he drew her out more and more to talk of all that they loved. They were quite like old friends, and Mrs. Marvin was almost inclined to be vexed with that gray-haired man for monopolizing the blooming and earnest girl.

"Do you know a Mr. Hamilton, a citizen of M——? He returned from Europe in the same steamer with me and my family." She assented briefly, and Mr. Dorrington went on. "He is a noble fellow, and has endeared himself to us all by his engaging qualities, his generosity, and consistency. I have rarely met his equal in talents or acquirements, in one of his age; yet, withal, he is the most modest of men.

While he was yet but groping in darkness for the true Light, I could not but regard him with favor; now that he is one with us in Christ, I feel that I could scarcely love him with more tenderness were he my own son."

Constance doubted if she had heard aright. For an instant she was silent; then she inquired, with a calmness which surprised herself:

"When did this change in his views take place?"

"He had been abroad, I understand, more than a year, when he first became known to us, through his fondness for my youngest child, a little girl of eight years old. They had accidentally met, and became friends immediately. Mr. Hamilton was rather reserved with the rest of my family; but I was very ill, and he had it in his power to show us some kindnesses; thus we were thrown more together. It is a long story to tell; but he travelled our route, and about five or six months ago he was baptized."

They were interrupted by Mrs. Marvin, who addressed some words to Mr. Dorrington. There were sounds of more earnest talking in the adjoining room; there were new arrivals of evening guests. Mr. Hamilton and Miss Dorrington had come, and the father had gone into the front drawing room to meet his daughter. Was there no magnetic influence, no electric tide of love which flowed from heart to heart, to make known to Constance how near she stood to Edward? She only knew she could learn no more that night, for Mr. Dorrington was gone; and she said, "Let us go—it is late," to Caxton, as he came toward her. Yet she remained by the chair from which she had risen, like one in a reverie.

"How lovely! How like! oh, how like! Look!" cried Hattie Dorrington.

Mr. Hamilton started. The face and figure pointed out to him were Constance Langdon's. Her countenance wore the expression of almost perfect peace. Never had he seen those dark eyes so lustrous with joy; never had he seen those lovely features so unclouded.

"How beautiful!" continued the enthusiastic Miss Dorrington. "That face bears the look which one sees but once in a lifetime. She reminds me of Evangeline:

'All was ended now—the hope, the fear, and the sorrow;
All the aching of heart, the restless, unsatisfied longing;
All the dull, deep pain, and the constant anguish of patience.'

She is very like that little picture you painted while at Rome. Do you remember Amy asking who it was? and when you made answer, 'An angel,' she cried out that 'angels never had dark hair!' But see—she is moving! She bids Mrs. Marvin 'good night.' I am so sorry. I wonder who she is!"

"Miss Langdon. I used to know her." Miss Dorrington heard no more, for her companion had left her, and was apparently renewing his acquaintance with the fair stranger.

Constance, bewildered by the tidings she had heard that night, and rejoicing in her desire granted, was surprised and startled by the appearance of Hamilton. Overwhelmed by a weight of gratitude and joy, the words of welcome died away upon her lips, the power of speech seemed almost gone, and she could only falter out a few trite sentences,

which were to his ear but cold civilities. He turned away disappointed. "I had not expected a warm, glad greeting," he thought, bitterly, "but some token of sympathy might have been manifested, that a wanderer had been gathered to the fold. She fears lest I should now claim her. She is wrong. I know too well my own unworthiness, and how entirely she is lost to me. There was no hope of such reward to urge me to the step which I have taken."

The return of Constance and the Doctor to Mona's house was quietly and speedily accomplished. Caxton had all the talking to do, and he did but little. They were both glad to find Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell together.

"Did you pass a pleasant evening?" said Mona.

"Very pleasant," answered Constance.

"Tolerably agreeable," remarked the Doctor. "There were several persons present, among them Mr. Hamilton; but we had only opportunity to say, 'How d'ye do?' He arrived late."

Maxwell's eyes fell on Constance. Her radiant face told her story.

"I hope he will not come here to see you, Constance," cried Mona, involuntarily. "I cannot endure him!"

"He is much changed," said the Doctor. "I learned, some time ago, that he had renounced infidelity, and come into the Church." Maxwell's start, and low-muttered curses, were unnoticed by all but his wife. Her heart beat more quickly with an undefined terror. "Mr. Hamilton is a peculiar man—very fascinating, I grant," continued Caxton, "but a man whose influence is almost too powerful. He would

rather be dreaded than loved. Did you observe that Miss Dorrington he was escorting, Miss Constance? Is that the young lady who was reported a *fiancée* of Mr. Gifford?"

"I believe so. The Dorrington family were abroad; it must be the same."

"We have gossiped enough," said the Doctor. "Now good night, ladies. Good night, Mr. Maxwell."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

*"Camillo. Thou execrable man, beware !
Cenci. Of thee ?
Why, this is idle ! We should know each other."*

EDWARD HAMILTON was seated in his hotel on the following evening, when a waiter brought to him a letter. The handwriting of the superscription surprised him. He tore open the envelope. The note was perused first rapidly, then more slowly ; then he said, half aloud :

"She never wrote it ; she could not." He laid the sheet upon the table. The words it contained were these :

"You have returned to the United States. I am happy in the renewal of our friendly intercourse, and in the belief that you are no longer a wanderer, deprived of all the associations which cluster around one's native land and early home. I am glad that you have abjured those hateful errors to which you once adhered, and that your eyes are opened to the true Light. I rejoice over you as a 'brand plucked from the burning'—as one ready to perish, but saved after passing through fearful peril. In memory of what we once were to

each other, I feel my power to write freely to you of what has been, and what might be. Sensible I am of your high regard for me; a regard which, despite my unworthiness, and all the vicissitudes of the past, has proved unwavering. Yet I feel that I can never make you that return which you desire. Believe in my heartfelt gratitude, in my sincere friendship, but look for nothing *more*. My sympathies, my good wishes, my prayers shall be ever yours. Let us be *friends*—brother and sister, if you will; but no stronger tie can ever bind us. When I recall to mind all the past, I cannot express the pain with which I write these words. The time has been when all might have been changed—when a warmer sentiment was growing in my heart; and had no insuperable barrier *then* existed, our lives might have been united. But—I did not know myself; I thought my heart was yours. It was the dreaming fancy of a romantic girl. Should I *now* wed you, I should render you miserable, for you would know my heart cold. Be, then, my friend. Let us ever meet as friends. Let no allusions to the past be made. You are surrounded with much to make, even this life, full of joy. You will find some other, whose soul and heart are attuned to yours. You will forget the romance and the dreams of the past. You will learn to remember but as your sincere and faithful *friend*,

“CONSTANCE LANGDON.”

Hamilton unlocked his writing desk, and from his private drawer drew out several letters which bore the same signature. The handwriting was compared with that of the note

so lately received, and the most acute observer could have detected no difference.

"I will not believe she wrote it. It is a forgery. I will ferret out the author of this villany, and punish him as he deserves." But no; the letter was too ingeniously worded, and doubts returned. Her manner on the preceding night was constrained, unnatural. "She need not fear," he thought again, half sadly, half bitterly. "I can too easily remember those words spoken more than two years ago. Two years ago—her look, her attitude, her gesture of aversion. She is too kind to tell me of that fearful duel, and all its horrors; she but writes 'she did not know herself.' It is enough!"

He suddenly recollected she was staying in Maxwell's house. "He wrote this letter," thought Hamilton, his agitation and excitement increasing. "Was it not enough that I should know my future blighted—my heart's desire never could be realized? but must he taunt me with my misery? This is *too* bitter—too hard to bear!"

The door was opened. He turned sharply to reprove the intruder of his privacy, and saw—Maxwell. The two men confronted each other for a moment, and no look of friendly recognition passed between them. Involuntarily they noted at once the letter on the table, and on the face of Maxwell there lurked a fiendish smile. The dark, full brows of Hamilton usually expressed resolution; now, rough and bending, they denoted wrath.

"You are attending to your correspondence," sneered the visitor. "I am sorry I intruded. But learning, last even-

ing, from my cousin Constance, that you were in the country, I hastened to pay my respects, and assure you of my welcome."

His *cousin* Constance! The title stung Hamilton, as was meant; that was easily read in the contracted brow and more compressed lip. He handed the obnoxious letter to the newcomer. "Tell me how *you* dared to write those lines?"

The letter was taken coolly, and as coolly read. "A very pretty, well-worded letter," remarked Maxwell, unheeding the question. "Cousin Constance writes well and piously. It is a pleasant matter to be the *friend* of a pretty girl, and to be 'remembered in her prayers!' If I were an unmarried man, I should sue for the same favors."

Hamilton's passionate, excitable temperament was fully roused. It was no human strength of will which restrained his hand from violence, and controlled the greater expression of his rage. He said, in those low, yet distinct tones so indicative of deep feeling: "You wrote that letter. It is a forgery!"

Maxwell's color faded to a sickly hue, yet he answered, clearly and firmly: "I never wrote it."

"It is false—you did!" cried the other, forgetting all save his resentment. "Your life has been a tissue of falsehood and crime. From your childhood you have wrought only misery, and rejoiced only in vice. You have brought a stain upon my name. You have brought sorrow, shame, and curses on all connected with you, by whatever tie. I have borne those taunts, those injuries from you, which from no other man I would have endured. I have remembered—

with regret and loathing, it is true—the tie of blood between us, yet with a sacredness which would have forgiven the past, its cruelty and its dishonor. I have befriended you in your sore need, when you wrote to me, even insolently demanding aid, which you dared not ask from the family of your unhappy wife. Francis Burton, this must end. You are deluded by the idle fancy that my name is so dear to me that I will endure all this in silence. You are wrong. Last of my family, what matters it to me if——”

Maxwell interrupted him. “And the ‘family of my unhappy wife’—what will the knowledge of my deeds and character be to them? This is your Christianity, high-minded gentleman. I thought it was but a cloak in which to woo the devout Constance, and I am not mistaken.”

Hamilton was recalled to himself. If his companion had doubted his sincerity, his doubts now fled as he saw the flush of anger fade from his face, his eyes lose their fire, and his pale lips move in voiceless prayer. It was the peace of forgiveness which was craved, and surely the suppliant stood in sore need then.

The scene which followed, it would be in vain to describe. Maxwell told then the story of his life, much which Edward already knew, and much unknown, but all with the concentrated bitterness of one devoid of every finer feeling, destitute alike of principle or hope, yet conceiving himself grievously wronged and despised. As his eyes rested on the face and form of Hamilton, so strangely like his father’s—that man whom of all others he had most hated—the venom and horrible malignity of Maxwell grew more intense. No

longer taunting or scornful, his language gained a fearful eloquence, which was startling. His story ended, he spoke of present pressing wants. His own fortune was gone ; to Mr. Harcourt he could not apply ; of Hamilton he demanded aid. He was no longer eloquent ; he was now fierce and threatening only. Hamilton was firm in his resolves. He reminded him of the ample provision made for him through his wife's fortune ; of the private debts contracted through his own extravagance, which he had paid for him but a few months before. He told him he was willing to serve him again, where he might, but never would countenance his indulgence in vice. He said all this not harshly, but kindly, determined that, whatever evil might have been wrought in the past, no evil now should, by God's help, ensue through him to Maxwell. He besought him to consider, ere it was too late, the duty which he owed to his wife and child ; to let them, at least, remember him without shame ; to give up the miserable course of gaming which he now pursued, and which robbed him alike of money and of peace.

What more he might have urged, was ended by the violence of the wretched man, so lost to every sense of honor. He derided Edward as a mean hypocrite. He heaped upon him every scornful epithet. All this Hamilton bore with patience ; it affected him as little as such idle words could. But when Maxwell, growing more desperate, used threats of personal violence, the temper of the natural man preponderated over the meekness of the Christian, and his derisive, contemptuous laugh grated on the ear of his companion. A lodger in the next apartment, hearing excited voices, stepped

into the passage to listen more intently, and satisfy his curiosity. One person seemed demanding something, which another, who spoke in a lower tone, refused. There was scarcely an instant pause, then he heard some muttered words, and his ear caught imperfectly the sentence, "Go you, and your new-found piety, to heaven!" Then followed the report of a pistol; then a scuffle; and he tried the door; it was fastened within, and he knocked loudly, and called for help. There was perfect silence in the room. The door was thrown open, and a tall man presented himself before the affrighted lodger. His countenance was imperturbable, as he inquired, with the utmost *sang-froid*, the occasion of his visit.

"I heard high words, sir," cried the astonished eavesdropper, now surrounded by several persons.

"If your ear, my good fellow, had not been so closely applied to the door, you had not been disturbed by unusual noise. Are you always so alarmed because of the accidental firing of a pistol? I believe that I alone am answerable for any damages which may have occurred."

The landlord now entered the room, and perceived Maxwell standing near a window, in the frame of which a ball had penetrated. A few sentences happily worded by Hamilton sufficed for explanation, and, greatly confounded, the intruders disappeared. When they were gone, Hamilton turned toward his unwelcome guest, who was now regarding him with a look of fear. "What ruin, O unhappy man! what certain destruction would you bring upon yourself! I bear a charm against your hate. Let the enmity which is

between us cease. Go. Be thankful that He whose mercy is infinite, has prevented you from accomplishing your fell purpose!"

When he was again alone, Hamilton sank into a seat, marvelling for what he was reserved—three times miraculously preserved from the deadly enmity of this man. The letter still haunted his thoughts. He again believed that Constance had written it, desiring to save him greater pain. He would at least fulfil her desires; he would neither reply to the letter, nor allude to what was *past*. In their intercourse from henceforth there should be only the present and the future. And faithfully he performed his resolve.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

“What I gone without a word!”

“WHERE is my ring, Doctor?” said Constance, looking up from her work. “I thought I had lost it, but Mona tells me that you carried it away.”

“Yes; Mrs. Maxwell was right. I forgot to return it. Will you tell me the sorrowful story now?”

“No, no. It is no longer a dreary memento of the past; it brings no thought but joy. Yet the device should have been a cross; the word, Faith; the motto, ‘*Sursum corda.*’”

The Doctor stood watching the young lady, as she plied her needle, for some moments before he spoke. She was busy with her own thoughts, and did not observe his silence. At length he said :

“If there is only Hope written on that ring for me, you will let me keep it?”

“I have never given it to you,” she answered, gayly. “What a beggar you are become! Ask me for something else—not this.”

“I would ask you for too much, if I asked for anything

else. I only ask the *hope* now; I would patiently wait, were 'it deferred,' if so I might gain, at last, the desire."

Something in his emphasis and manner startled her. For the first time in all their long acquaintance she trembled for what might follow. "We are very true friends," she answered, gently, yet without raising her eyes to his, "but you cannot have the ring, Doctor."

He leaned over the chair, and dropped the bright golden circlet into her tiny workbasket. Neither spoke. The clock upon the mantel ticked away as monotonously as before, and the needle of Constance went in and out, in and out, as though hemming was the work of life, labor was unending, rest there was none.

His voice faltered a little, as he said: " *L'Esperance* has been my watchword, and now you tell me I must choose another. Shall it be *Memory*? It is all I shall have left."

"Let it be *L'Amitie*," cried Constance, "and it shall be mine, too. It is you who have taught me to value friendship."

"Yet, while I taught you friendship, I learned another lesson," replied the Doctor, smiling sadly; "a lesson which it is harder to forget. I will not reproach you; you never meant to teach it. You could not know the idle dreams in which I have indulged, and warn me of my danger."

"What sorrow I have wrought," said Constance, tearfully, "I have wrought unwittingly. I never dreamed of this. I have been so selfishly mindful of my own heart's hopes, fears, and sorrow, I have been blind. Yet how could I know the truth, when I felt your interest and manner

all unchanged for years, and you in word and deed a brother!"

"I never thought to see you weep for me," said Caxton, more deeply moved by her distress. "I have been too presumptuous, too unmindful of my own unworthiness; I acquit you of all blame. Forgive me; blot out all memory of this hour. I owe to you the truest happiness I have ever known. Your bright example, your words of truth, of sympathy, of faith, have been ministers of good. Their influence still exists. Think of me ever, then, as the faithful *friend*, not unhappy, but—chastened." He paused. Constance put forth her hand; he took it in his. "Good-by," he said, unfalteringly.

"Good-by, the noble, generous friend," she replied, with all the earnestness of her earnest nature. "Good-by; and may He who is the Friend of friends be ever with you."

The clock ticked on in sad monotony; the work dropped from her hand. Caxton had gone, and with him had gone something which never could return. Mona, entering, found her still sitting idly, her hands folded, her eyes tearful.

"Constance, when did Dr. Caxton go? I wonder he could tear himself away so soon, when you look so pretty in that pink morning dress. When did he leave?"

"Some time—ago," stammered Constance, her face crimsoned.

"Fie, fie, you naughty girl! You have said 'No.' Poor Doctor!"

"Oh, Mona!"

"Nonsense! you could not help it. Why do you sigh

and fret over what must happen every day? I have foreseen this all along."

"And you did not warn me! Cruel, cruel!"

"Pshaw, Constance! Men do not die of love. The Doctor's wounded heart will heal. But you, my dear, have lost your friend. Friends do not turn to lovers always, but lovers to friends never!"

The May breezes entering through the open windows raised the lace curtains, and fanned Constance's cheeks. Mona stood by the table, turning carelessly the leaves of a book, while she hummed, with something of her former saucy, bantering air, the old song, "Love not."

"Have you seen Mr. Maxwell?" she inquired, at length.

"No," replied Constance, willing to turn the conversation, yet feeling return the vague sense of uneasiness which this man's name of late always awakened. "Some one of the servants said that he left a note for you hours ago, when he went out."

"A note!" exclaimed Mona, growing white. "How strange! He will be home to dinner. James," she called to a servant passing through the hall, "where is the note? What did Mr. Maxwell say?"

He had left no message with James, but with one of the maids; and the maid brought the note, saying Mr. Maxwell had only said she must give this letter to her mistress when she returned from her drive. Mona took it with a strange foreboding of evil. Constance read it in her face, and her heart responded to the dread. Yet it was the sound of her voice, and the touch of her hand, which gave to the wife

courage to open the envelope and read the letter—the letter which told her that her husband was gone from her, and she knew not where; only, that he would never return. She did not shriek, she did not faint; she only clutched the paper more tightly to her breast, as though she would keep the secret of her grief from all the world. Her young face was sorely changed in that moment of untold agony. Every vestige of color had faded away; the pallor was not ghastly, but like the whiteness of marble. Except for the wildness, almost fierceness of her eyes, she might have been turned to stone, so rigid, so immovable she remained. Constance entreated her to speak—to tell her what had happened. She neither wept, nor sighed; she did not move.

“Can nothing be done?” cried Constance. “Dear Mona, this stillness is frightful! Tell me what is your sore grief; together we may think of some good which may be done. For your child’s sake, speak!”

Slowly Mona unclosed her hand; yet, never looking toward her cousin, she gave the letter to her keeping. Constance learned the truth: Maxwell had left his wife and child with such bitter, heartless words, as added cruelty to cruelty. Beholding that face of utter woe, it was hard to forgive him; it was hard to forbear breaking forth in terms of reproach. Yet one sentence in the letter perplexed her. It ran thus: “Your father refused my demand. He will tell you the sum was large which I desired; yet it was my right; it was necessary for my needs. Failing in my request, but one course remained; I must leave this place——”

“Dearest,” said Constance, trying to speak encourage-

ment, "be comforted. He may not yet be gone from here. He may yet be found, and restored to you. He could not mean that all this shame and sorrow should light on you. He was, perhaps, but troubled beyond endurance, and thus wrote so bitterly and cruelly. He can be sought. Relieved from his troubles, he will return to you. Oh! hope, dear Mona—hope in God's mercy and His love. I will write to my uncle. He will come to you, and then—"

For the first time Mona turned her tearless eyes on Constance.

"If you write for him, if he comes, I will not see him. He sent my *all* from me; it was his doing. I will never see him again. I will never receive anything from his hand, for this dishonor and misery are his work!"

"Mona, Mona, cease! Think—he is your father. Can you speak such fearful words!"

"He is my father, but—the other is my husband. Constance, I will never forgive."

Constance was silent. There is a grief which defies comfort, and she knew not what to say. She could only throw her arms about her cousin, and kiss her white cheek. Mona did not withdraw from her embrace, but was passive, silent, cold. Alarmed, and more anxious to rouse her from her lethargy of woe, Constance said:

"Something must be done, some inquiries made. Can you think of no one who could give some clue to guide you to your husband?"

A change came over the face of Mona. It was not that the color returned; it was not that hope lighted her eyes

with a ray of joy ; it was that another horror possessed her, and yet awakened her to action. She essayed to speak, but the words died on her lips. At last she inquired, with a sort of breathless eagerness that was a strange contrast to her former apathy :

“ Is Edward Hamilton in this city ? ”

“ Yes,” replied Constance, a chill of fear to hear his name at such a moment stealing over her.

“ Are you sure ? Where is he—where ? ”

“ He was said to be at the —— House, more than a week ago. I do not know. In pity, tell me why you ask this ? ”

“ I must see him. Send for him. If I should write for him, he might refuse to come to me. Send *you* for him. Send ! ”

What woman, at such a time, might not hesitate ! Yet Constance, with firm trust in Hamilton’s integrity and truth, and carrying ever in her heart the memory of hopes and prayers for him realized and granted, complied with the request. A few lines, desiring him to come to Mrs. Maxwell, quietly and speedily were despatched ; and then Mona, agitated and restless, retired to her own room, and shut herself out from the eyes of all those who dwelt about her.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Still as she spoke, she gathered strength,
And armed herself to bear.
It was a fearful sight to see,
Such high resolve and constancy,
In form so soft and fair."

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

HAMILTON arrived, and asked only for Constance. She felt that he was wise, and went to him at once. His presence inspired her with calmness and courage. Seeing him, recollecting all for which she daily rejoiced and offered thanks, a hope, almost a faith even for Mona and for Maxwell's future rose in her heart. There was a something in his face, which she had never observed before. The restless, saddened expression had departed; the mind, which ever shone so eloquently, still made its power known; but the "divine within" now beamed forth. The generous yet passionate nature was elevated, ennobled, sanctified. She felt that they no longer spoke only heart to heart, or "mind to mind, but *soul to soul*." With her sweet composure all restored, she greeted him.

"I asked for you, Miss Constance"—(how long it was,

she thought, since he had called her by that familiar title!)—“I asked for you, because I thought you might give me some intimation of the reason for your cousin’s desire to see me, which would prepare me, or direct me wisely for the interview with her. One question first—is Mr. Maxwell at home?”

“He is not at home. He is——” She hesitated to tell the shameful truth. “He is away. I do not know why my cousin should send for you at such a time. You must be able to conjecture.”

“I beg your pardon,” he said, interrupting her. “I can easily surmise the reasons. It will be easier for you to answer my questions, than to tell me the painful story I can almost read written on your face. He is gone suddenly, and strangely, and you know not where. I had no knowledge of his absence,” he said, answering her look of surprised inquiry. “I guessed the truth. Where is Mr. Harcourt?”

“In Clifton,” replied Constance, sadly. “He knows nothing of this. Mona would not see her father if he came to her. I would have sent a telegram to Waverley, if she had not so bitterly objected. She thinks he was the cause of all this woe.”

“Something may be done,” he answered, kindly, but she could not fail to observe that he looked anxious and disturbed. “When I have seen your cousin, some plan may be concerted which may relieve her distress, and perhaps restore her husband. Keep the matter very quiet. Let the servants, and others, think he has only gone upon some sudden journey. No time must be lost before a search for him

is made. You will pardon me, then, if I ask to see Mrs. Maxwell immediately, and—quite alone."

"I am sorry you should be troubled with our cares and griefs," said Constance, as she moved away. In her sympathy, she had made herself one with Mona, and the words, "our cares," gave Hamilton stronger incentive to exertion in the matter.

"You must be assured," he said, with evident sincerity, yet a slight reserve of manner, "that it would be a pleasure for me to do anything for your family. There can be no obligation; it is but humanity, to offer services at such a time."

The hand of Constance was upon the door, but she turned toward him.

"I must thank you for your kindness to my father. Notwithstanding your generous concealment, we have at last discovered that you are in truth our landlord. I am not too proud—" But her face was crimson-dyed, and, try as she would to keep them back, the proud tears stood in her eyes—"I am not too proud to acknowledge our indebtedness, and thank you with all my heart."

Hamilton, always self-possessed and ready witted, was for once completely at a loss. He was as embarrassed as a schoolboy detected in reciting his lesson from his book, and stammered out something about his friend's "stupidity"—the "former landlord's extortionate rent;" "he could not receive double price for a mere box of a house; his indebtedness to Mr. Langdon," and that "the whole affair was not worth talking about." But having shown her knowledge of

his generosity, and expressed her gratitude, Constance was ready to go in quest of Mona. Hamilton had scarcely time to collect his thoughts, ere he heard the rustle of a silk dress, and, turning, saw Mrs. Maxwell. He had made a movement toward her, but her aversion, almost distrust of him, was so evident, he merely bowed, not coldly, but with some sort of reverence for her grief, and remained standing. She sank on a sofa, and motioned him to take a seat, although at some distance from her. She spoke, at first, with difficulty, but her voice grew more clear as she proceeded.

"You have heard, if you possessed no other knowledge, at least from Constance, of the absence of Mr. Maxwell. I will not attempt to disguise my anxiety to learn some tidings of him. I have known, Mr. Hamilton, for a long time, of your enmity toward Mr. Maxwell; I have known of the bitterness of his feeling toward you. I have sent for you, not to offer assistance, but to answer my questions. Where is my husband?"

Mr. Hamilton was startled by the implied charge, but he answered, without testifying indignation or resentment:

"I do not know, madam."

"Have you seen him since your return to the United States?"

"I have. One week ago, I passed him on the street. We neither spoke, nor gave sign of recognition."

The account was given so quietly, with such apparent freedom from mystery, that Mona gained some courage to make mention of the horrible dread which oppressed her. Her next question evidenced to Hamilton that she knew

nothing of a near relationship which he bore to Maxwell ; and, relieved from the fear which had haunted him, he saw his course plainly.

"I have said I know of your past difficulty with him—that fearful encounter. Tell me, on your honor, Mr. Hamilton, is there no other cause for his animosity toward you ? Do not spare me ; tell me. I can bear all—anything—but not this torturing suspense."

She looked so weak, so faint, so trembling, so young and helpless, he hesitated how to frame his answer. "I bear no hatred toward him. I have given him no cause to hate me, but the one you have mentioned ; that I bitterly repent" He spoke as gently as to a child.

"On your honor, is this true ? Oh ! hide nothing from me. On your honor, tell me ! "

He flushed a little at the doubt expressed, but, more mindful of her grief-stricken heart, answered solemnly : "Before God, I say, I have given him no other cause." His reverence at the mention of the holy name, his tone and words, gave her assurance. Her hands, before so tightly clasped, fell by her side ; her head drooped. The load of grief was lightened, and Hamilton continued : "I have long known your husband and his pursuits, yet you can scarcely regard me as a friend, or confidently trust me, remembering, as you must, the past. That which I have to say, will be painful to you to hear, and for me to speak to you ; yet it gives some clue to the reason for his——" Desertion, he would have said, but checked himself, and, before he could proceed, Mona had roused herself to speak.

"He was driven away from me, and from his child. He was embarrassed by debts, by difficulties, from which he struggled in vain to disentangle himself. He was refused aid, where he had sought, and should have obtained assistance and relief. Thus he was compelled to flee from the troubles which encompassed him. He shall be sought. I will seek him."

"Your father——" began Hamilton, but she stopped him.

"Do not dare to mention his name. He is my worst, my most cruel enemy. It was he who refused the aid which would have kept——" She was interrupted.

"You are mistaken. You are very wrong," he said, almost sternly. "Mr. Harcourt was your husband's truest friend. Sad as it may be for you to know the truth, the debts of which you speak were those—so called—of 'honor.' Knowing all the evil which had ensued, and must ensue again, Mr. Harcourt refused the sums sought; sums which would have encouraged the propensity for gaming, and finally impoverished not you alone, but your child, and brought certain ruin on the man you love. Believe me, it is to your father you must turn now, if you would gain tidings of your lost one. He, knowing all, can seek him, and, perchance, recall him. Let it be your part now to charge no blame on the innocent, and, should your desire be fulfilled, to lead the once misguided from the path of danger, to the path of right and honor."

He did not allow her to perceive how hopeless he felt, and his words, startling as they were, breathed of hope to Mona at the last.

"I will not," she said, "believe all this of him; yet, were he ten thousand times more insensible to good than you would picture him; were *every* crime and shame coupled with his name, I would cling to him forever. *My* heart should never falter in its true allegiance. *My* love, great, abundant, unspeakable, could shield him from all the world!"

She almost gasped for breath, and clung to the chair from which she had risen for support. Never had Hamilton felt such bitter detestation, such fierce indignation toward Maxwell. As he looked on that frail, sorrowing, heart-broken woman, the memory of all the evil, shame, and misery that man had wrought passed through his mind, and, joined to this crowning villany, this wanton desertion, made a whole so monstrous, that he was appalled.

"Go," said Mona, almost in a whisper, so faintly she spoke, "and, if you have honor or heart, keep this my secret from all. Let none know but that he went knowingly of me, and shall return. Let none know of my disgrace and anguish." It was the first mention she had made of her own wretchedness; and, as though she had thus attached some blame to her husband, she repeated: "My disgrace and anguish, which came not through him, but through his misfortunes."

What could Hamilton do? What comfort could he bring? What assistance could he offer? He could only say: "Your secret is safe with me;" and, once more Mona motioning him to go, he departed.

The servants were told by Miss Langdon that Mrs. Maxwell was not well, and that Mr. Maxwell would not be at

home that night, and Mona was again secluded in her own apartment. A letter had arrived from Mrs. Harcourt, stating that Mr. Harcourt was ill, although not dangerously; thus all hope of assistance from him was at an end. Evening came. Alone in the now deserted and dreary drawing room, Constance meditated, trying in vain to find some ray of light through this great darkness which enveloped her miserable cousin. There was a sound of a step she knew in the passage, and a voice she knew speaking low to the servant. Again she saw Hamilton, and this time he brought tidings.

"I have traced him," he said. "He sailed at noon, to-day, in a merchant vessel for Havre. Once there, he can easily make his way to any place, where search would be useless. Forgive me for saying I think that it were best and happiest were he gone forever."

"But Mona," pleaded Constance.

"What can he be to her, but a source of ceaseless misery?" cried Hamilton. "With her true woman's heart, she would cling to him, and he would but repay her love and faithfulness with cruelty and scorn!" Constance had seen, in the month past, enough to know all this was true; but she feared to tell Mona that all hope was gone. "It is you," he added, more gently, noting her disquietude and perplexity, "who must make known these tidings to her. I can say nothing. It is those who love her, and whom she loves, who can alone minister to her comfort now."

Constance made no answer. "Vain is the help of man," she thought. "God help her!"

In another instant they were startled by the entrance of the object of her care.

"Where is he?" she asked of Hamilton. "Speak!"

"He sailed to-day, at noon, for Havre." There was a tender pity expressed in voice and eye. She looked at him intently, and believed the truth. She did not sigh; she did not hesitate; she only asked quickly:

"When does the next steamer sail? I must reach Havre before him."

"It sails to-morrow evening," replied Hamilton, answering Constance's look of fright with a smile of assurance. "You could not go, my dear madam. And if you did, unattended and alone, in a strange land, seeking one who desires to escape, how worse than fruitless would be your search!"

Even then Mona felt her strength failing. A mist seemed to come before her eyes, yet she would not lean on Constance, and replied:

"I *must* go. I could find him. I would never weary—"

The last words were scarcely uttered, ere, overpowered by a deadly faintness, she sank lifeless into the arms of Constance. Restored at length, she seemed at once to regain her knowledge of what had passed; but now she only moaned in piteous accents:

"I have none to seek him—no father, no brother. He is lost. I cannot live without him. Let me die, O God!"

"What can I do?" said Hamilton, bending over her, and remembering his own sad connection with all this woe.

"What can I do to prove to you my truth and sympathy? Prejudiced as you must be against me, and not, I know, without cause, yet I beseech you to forget the enmity which, in my breast at least, is dead long since. I have told you I bitterly repent the sinful past; then no longer doubt me. I will seek this man. I will find him. I will breathe no words of reproach. I will, if so it may be, restore him to you!"

Against her will, Mona believed in him, and, with a new-found strength, she threw herself at the feet of Hamilton.

"You have known the loss of home and family," she cried. "You can pity sorrow; but you have never known what it is to have your idol torn from your embrace; to be deprived of your all, by the hand of *man—not God!* I—I—am a wife—forsaken, helpless! Then *go*, seek him! Go! I believe you; I trust in you. Go!"

Inexpressibly moved, he raised her from the floor, and gave her to the care of Constance. He repeated his promise. He arranged that the departure should take place in the morning. She bade him faintly "farewell," and was assisted to her room. Quiet now, she begged again to be alone, and, with words of love and heavenly trust, Constance left her. As she went to her own room, a servant met her.

"The strange gentleman is below, Miss Langdon. He said he was waiting to say 'good-by.'"

The heart of Constance bounded with thankfulness, as she descended the stairs. Hamilton greeted her with the olden smile, as he said:

"A voyage across the Atlantic is not so trifling a jour-

ney, even to me, that I can make it without a good-by to my friends."

"But your journey will be so sudden," said Constance, regretfully, "you can make no adieux. What will Miss Susan say?"

"I am such a traveller," he answered, "I am always prepared for sudden flights. I will visit the Dorringtons to-night for an half hour, and run down to Clifton in the earliest morning train, returning in due season. These are the only farewells I shall feel necessary, and these can be accomplished. You are looking weary and anxious, Miss Constance. I shall be disposed to lecture you a little; for if you are to be the comforter of Mrs. Maxwell, you must wear a brighter face. A good rest, with the hope which comes with the morning, will do more for you than all my stupid advodings. So now, no longer to detain you, good night, and good-by!"

There was a something in his manner which she had never known before. Was it the something which had gone out with Caxton, to return with *him* no more? How strange, to think of Caxton as the *lover*; of Edward only as the *friend*!

"Good-by, Mr. Hamilton. How can I say how truly grateful we must ever be to you for this kindness! Wearisome, thankless, and almost hopeless must the task of searching for this unhappy man prove! Yet it is self-imposed. Your noble disinterestedness we can never repay. But oh! in all your wanderings, our thanks and blessings and prayers shall follow you."

"Stop!" he cried; "your praise is undeserved, and the good remembrance you promise me will be the highest reward which I could ask. You must not speak of debt; it is I only who am the debtor!" He paused. Again the "good-by" was spoken, and Constance added, in a low voice, "God speed you." He raised her hand to his lips, and, without another word, they parted.

The door closed with a heavy sound. Constance could hear the tread of the passers by, as, standing by the windows of that dimly lighted room, she looked out on the dark, starless night. Some figure moving across the street was so like his, that she thought for an instant he was returning. Would he return no more—no more? The ever-recurring question was like the prophecy of sorrow; and as she drew away from the window, her sleeve caught in the handle of the parlor bell, causing it to send forth a sound which, to her excited fancy, was like a knell for joys departed forever. "How miserable am I become," thought Constance, rousing herself from these sad meditations; "I, who but two short weeks ago believed no care could ever again depress me, no cloud could ever darken my path, and that my life would be one great thanksgiving!"

She went out from that darkened room. She entered the apartment of Mona, and the woebegone face brightened at her approach; for with Constance there entered the light, the hope, which years before had followed her into the presence of the bereaved skeptic, the despairing infidel.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

*"A power to choose the good, and see the right,
Is but a gleam poured down from Him, the Spirit's Light."*

THE BAPTISTERY.

MR. HARcourt, now partially restored to health, although by no means strong, had learned, through Constance, of the affliction of Mona. But the daughter refused to see the father, and even the entreaties of the mother could not avail to change her determination. She said: "You may come to me, mamma; but papa I cannot see, until my husband is restored to me."

Everything in Mona's house went on as before. Except that she grew daily weaker, and more silent, there was no change in her. The smiles and cooings of her babe could not rouse her from her calm indifference. She begged that Constance would go out as though nothing was the matter, and alone seemed to dread the gossip of neighbors and acquaintance. But Constance had less inclination for absenting herself from her cousin than before; and, never unmindful of the shadow hanging over the future of Mona, cared less to meet the gay flatterers who had ever surrounded the

young wife in her day of pride. Thus, one morning, as she went to take an airing, after long confinement in the house, she did not make a round of fashionable calls, but a visit to Miss Dorrington. Their acquaintance had been very slight, for it was only recently made; but they had much in common, of which they spoke, and felt, and on this day their intercourse was entirely pleasant.

A young lady, who seemed on terms of great intimacy with Miss Dorrington, was present; and, after a time, mention being made of Mrs. Maxwell, some one remarked that she must miss Mr. Maxwell greatly, and inquired if his departure was not sudden. Constance assented, with the unpleasant consciousness that there was something to conceal, and was glad when Miss Spencer prevented farther questioning, by saying:

“Unexpected departures are the order of the day, or times. Mr. Hamilton took his flight quite as suddenly. Do you not miss his society sadly, Hattie?” she added, smiling archly. “You look very disconsolate.”

“We are all disconsolate,” said Mrs. Dorrington; “and a great commotion was excited in our household, when he informed us of his contemplated voyage. The children were crying when they said ‘good-by;’ and as for their father and mother, they were almost as bad. Mr. Hamilton—poor fellow!—when he came into the house, looked as if he had the heartache; but he tried so hard to make us say ‘good-by’ cheerfully, that he went away with his usual smile. But, oh dear me!” cried the good lady, “when I commence to talk of him, I forget everything else. You will excuse an

old woman, Miss Langdon. I will leave these young people to entertain you. I must go to my little ones."

"But I must say 'good morning' immediately," said Miss Spencer; and, with a nod of apology to Constance, Hattie Dorrington followed her friend from the room.

Although Mrs. Dorrington was talking all the time, and Constance tried to listen, it was impossible for her to help overhearing the two young ladies in the hall, as they chatted together at a very unsafe distance from the door.

"So it will be in November, dear Hattie," were the first words she heard. "All good be with you, my darling, in your married life. But are you sure Mr. Hamilton will be home in that time?"

"Oh! do not hint at his prolonged absence," was all Constance could hear of the reply. The voices were very low for some minutes, and then they grew more animated again.

"It is strange how often you were reported engaged, Hattie, when the real secret was kept so close! I can hear Mr. Hamilton say, in his droll way, 'Poor Gifford!'"

Miss Dorrington laughed. "I did not care, so long as it was the wrong one. We used to laugh about it."

Constance started. She had been misinformed, then; this was the secret of his change of manner. It was not Mr. Gifford who was the accepted lover of Hattie Dorrington, but Edward Hamilton. There was some more low talking, then Miss Spencer said:

"I remember how he made you take his arm at our house, one evening, when we were quite alone, and brought

you to me, with such an air, inquiring if I did not think the *future Mrs. Hamilton* charming."

"Nonsense. I remember that he asked you if you did not think *I* ought to be congratulated!"

This was the last Constance heard. It was enough. And, while she seemed to be interested in the discourse of Mrs. Dorrington, mused on the strangeness of all this knowledge which had come to her. Constance had loved with all the intensity of her nature, but her affection had been so purified by her sacrifice and the trials through which she had passed, her fears and anguish for him had been so great, that, when the tidings of his faith reached her, her only feeling was praise. There was no thought that the obstacle to her earthly happiness was removed ; her heart was lifted upward only ; her songs were all *Te Deums*. This rhapsody, this pure devotion, could not always be the same, for women are not angels. The feeling so long repressed, had risen again. She watched for him ; she saw his face ; she heard his voice with the olden sense of joy ; but she felt, by slow degrees, that, nearer as they were to each other in the holiest of bonds, some barrier of another sort had risen. Despite his gentleness to her, and his kindness to Mona, she felt this, although she would not acknowledge it. Now she understood, or thought she understood all. Could her heart be sad, whose prayer had been answered—whose dearest hope for years had been realized ? Had she not enough to make her evermore rejoice ? Constance was brave ; she was strong. Constance was a *true woman* ; and, feeling him no longer hers, something of the pride of woman mingled with

all her thoughts. She could rejoice for the one, *once so dear*, brought from darkness into light. But she could not mourn for the loss of the heart once hers, when that heart was given to another. "Their lives, henceforth, had separate ends; they never could be one again."

A little more quiet and thoughtful Hattie found her, when she returned to the parlor; and when the two young ladies were quite alone, they talked the more gravely and quietly.

"Mr. Hamilton and I are great friends," said Constance, steadily; "and so, having known him long and intimately, I must and do take a true interest in all that concerns his greatest good. Will you tell me, then, how and where all this marvellous change in the man has taken place?"

"You speak of his new-born faith," said Hattie, her sweet face brightening. "There is no change in him but that."

"Except as that affects his outward life and manner," suggested Constance.

"He rarely or ever speaks of any serious subject," said Hattie, "and is in manner, as I have always found him, courteous, and perhaps reserved. Only that he is more equable in his temper, and less moody, or given to extremes of gaiety or depression, I see no alteration. When we first knew him, I thought I had never seen such a gloomy face; and he dressed always in such deep mourning, that we girls, before we gained knowledge of his name, called him 'the young widower.' He made friends with my little sister Amy, and thus we all came to know him, and, papa being quite sick, he

was very kind to us. We never knew he was an infidel, until papa, growing stronger, began to attempt a service again. We used the service on Sundays, even although away from home and Protestant churches. Papa used to read it, and have us all together. Mr. Hamilton was invited by Amy to visit us the next day, and join with us. We were present, and papa smiled approval. Mr. Hamilton made some laughing excuse. 'No, no,' said my father; 'give up your pleasuring. You have been good to us in our trouble; with us give thanks, now that we can rejoice.' But Mr. Hamilton did not perceive any occasion for special thanksgiving; he thought Mr. Dorrington had gotten over his indisposition very finely; the climate, and so forth, had very naturally conduced to his more speedy recovery. 'But,' answered my father, with peculiar gravity, 'there is One who made these efficacious. He works by means. To Him who orders and overrules, we offer praise.' Poor Mr. Hamilton must have been impressed in some sort by these words, for he looked intently at papa, as though he would read the very thoughts of his heart, and then said, without his habitual reserve, but with an abruptness quite unusual, 'I will not deceive you, sir. I am a total disbeliever in that which you term revelation.' The first thing which papa did, was to devise an excuse for sending the three children out of the room. It was very ingeniously contrived, and then he replied, that he was pained to hear this sad confession from one whom he had already learned to love and respect; but he could not let his little ones hear Mr. Hamilton make such an acknowledgment; he could not have their pure faith sul-

lied by the doubts which he expressed. He ceased speaking, for your friend colored very high, and rose from his seat. I think I never heard a sigh so deep, or heard a sadder voice. I could almost recall his words. Death, he said, had taken from him all his family; religion had always stood between him and his friendships, and his hopes or joys. Stranger as he was in that strange land, he had found some solace for that loss which was ever fresh in his mind, in our companionship. This also, he said, stern duty forbade. He was not surprised. He would anticipate papa's desire, and rid him of the baneful contagion of his society. But papa prevented his departure, and they had a long talk together, for, after a few moments, mamma and I went away. He did not come to see us for some time, but went on to the next town, spending two or three weeks. At last he returned, but was never quite himself, never so cordial with us. But papa talked with him sometimes, I suspect, when we were not by, and set him to thinking and studying too. For when Mr. Hamilton went away again, I saw him give him a Bible, marked throughout, and heard him say, in a low voice: 'You will examine this, for my sake. You will not fail.' Mr. Hamilton was silent for a moment, then promised, adding, with his peculiar smile, 'that he thanked my father for his solicitude and fatherly interest in his behalf, but that it could not alter him. He had studied, he had reasoned, he had heard arguments, all in vain. Beautiful and wise as was the Book, its simplicity, beauty, and wisdom affected his intellect and appealed touchingly to his emotions, but did not touch his heart. He could not admit it as divine; his reason rebelled

against the thought.' My father answered, that never, since he knew of his blindness, had he omitted a prayer for him each day. 'I give this Book to you,' he added. 'I pray you to read it, and may He whose word it is give you enlightenment.' We did not meet again for months. I asked about Mr. Hamilton once, and papa replied: 'Hattie, it would be well, if, when you think of that man, you would use a prayer.' And so I did, each day afterward, for him."

Constance leaned forward, and drew Hattie's hand within her own. Thus united they remained, while Miss Dorrington pursued her story :

"We were at C——, when, for some reason—I have forgotten why—we changed our plans a little, and went to M——. It was on Mr. Hamilton's route, and thus again we met him." She paused for an instant—then continued: "He was evidently very glad to see us, and I thought papa looked more cheerful. He travelled with us to Florence, and there we determined to pass the winter. He came to us very little, although he stayed in Florence. A while before Christmas, he seemed to care only for papa, and talked with him alone. One Sunday he arrived about the hour when we had service, and, in answer to papa's look of invitation, and Amy's cry that it was also St. Thomas's Day, said that he would attend. 'St. Thomas is my patron saint, Mr. Dorrington. He was the man who doubted. Ah, I would give all I am worth, for the faith which you possess; but it will never be mine. I cannot believe, although I would.' Papa's smile was almost heavenly. 'Thank God,' he cried, 'that He has given to you the desire.'

"We had arranged one room like a little chapel, and I thought papa's tone never so solemn, although his voice was weak and low. Mr. Hamilton stood through all the service, near the door. It seemed as if the Gospel was written for him—'be not faithless, but believing ;' the response of the now believing disciple, 'My Lord and my God ;' and the words, 'Because thou hast *seen*, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' I turned involuntarily, and looked toward Mr. Hamilton. He had bowed his head, and covered his face with his hands. He remained standing in this same attitude of reverence when we were seated, and papa could hardly articulate, so great was his emotion, when he commenced his brief lecture. He spoke of 'the blessedness of him who, having beheld the sacred hands and feet which were pierced for us, cried, "My Lord and my God!"' but how blessed, thrice blessed are they who, with the eyes of faith *alone*, look through the clouds of doubt and uncertainty to the Eternal Light; who, casting aside the imperfect wisdom of earth, fall down before the cross, acknowledging Him.' I cannot recall all he said; I but know that, when we knelt, Mr. Hamilton knelt too, and that the blessing of peace was not ours only, but his also."

Constance's tears fell fast, but they were as free from sadness as those drops which fall when the bow of promise shines forth in the heavens. She longed to be where she could pour forth her heart's great thanks to Him who had so often heard its great sorrow, and had removed it forever. The eyes of Hattie were dewy also. "How good and pure,"

she thought, "this girl must be, who can rejoice thus over one once lost!"

"Oh, Bessie! Bessie!" said Constance, quite aloud; "if, in the Paradise of God, you can have knowledge of this unspeakable mercy, what added praise must your glad heart offer!"

"You knew his sister, then?" said Hattie. "He never speaks of her to us; yet once he told her name to Amy."

"I knew her well," said Constance. "Her head rested on my arms at the last, for we loved one another. Her last words were, 'Come, brother, come!'"

"Then you, who heard her call, must indeed be glad. Oh! Miss Langdon, we were all happy; but there was no such joy as yours!"

She might well say so, for the uplifted face of Constance spoke of a happiness beyond words—a happiness so pure as to be almost celestial.

Some of the children came running in, and saying that the rain was falling fast. The new friends had been so occupied in their conversation, they had been unconscious of all else.

"I am really glad," remarked Hattie, "for now you will be obliged to stay."

"Only for a little while, I am afraid," rejoined Constance, with a smile; "for Aunt Harcourt is with my cousin, and she will send the carriage, for she knows that I am here."

It was true, for Mona could not bear to have Constance long absent, and the carriage was sent, while the Dorrings



tons lamented that which they termed "Mrs. Maxwell's selfishness." The "good-bys" were spoken, when Constance drew Hattie aside with a sudden impulse, and, bending down, kissed her soft cheeks.

"As you must know now," she whispered, "that I am truly interested in Mr. Hamilton, you must let me say that I have heard of your betrothal; and I wish you both joy with all my heart."

Miss Dorrington put her two hands upon her companion's shoulders, and looked up into her eyes. There was a mixture of surprise, amusement, and embarrassment on her face, as she replied, with a funny laugh, which was somehow contagious:

"You are just as wrong as you can be. It is Mr. Gifford, and the other is to be first groomsman. Oh! what a queer, queer world we live in!"

A feeling of relief—a joyous sense of hope returned—lighted up the countenance of Constance. She could only say:

"Oh! I know Mr. Gifford too. You have my congratulations all the same."

But Hattie looked with her honest gray eyes a little wistfully and very intently into the darker orbs of the speaker. Her own blushes were fading, but the complexion of Constance deepened to a vivid scarlet. "I cannot conceive," said the latter, "what it is which makes my face glow!" While Hattie saucily remarked: "Mr. Hamilton thinks bright colors are the prettiest!"

"I am so very glad," thought Miss Langdon, as she

drove away, "that Mr. Gifford is to marry Miss Dorrington. They will make such a very nice match!" Then she looked out upon the storm. She mused of clouds that cleared away; of the sunshine that followed; and Edward Hamilton was in all her thoughts.

"I was sure," meditated Miss Dorrington, while pretending to hear Amy repeat her geography lesson, "that bachelor did not carry that face in his memory for nothing. Amy," she said, aloud, "do you think that young lady that was here to-day looked like Mr. Hamilton's picture?"

"Yes; I believe she did. I have not seen the picture in ever so long. What is the matter, Hattie? What makes you laugh?"

"Oh, nothing; only the world is not so queer, after all!"

CHAPTER XL.

"Stars look o'er the sea.
Few, and sad, and shrouded;
Faith our light must be,
When all else is clouded."

MRS. HEMANS.

MONA had been very ill. She was slowly recovering. They did not now keep from her all the tidings which had been received from Edward Hamilton, though those tidings were unfavorable. He had found Maxwell, but his efforts to bring him home again were unavailing. He had wandered away yet farther from him, and Hamilton was once more seeking him, for he did not yet despair of success. His letters were so kind and considerate—he softened all the harsh truths—he consoled, even while he wrote of sorrow, that Mona learned to watch for them, and would read them again and again, trying to gain from them some hope on which to rest.

Constance must leave her soon, and Mr. Harcourt mourned more sadly than her aunt or cousin, for he was shut out from the room of his child, and it was his niece only who could administer balm to her wounded heart. He longed that Mona should be at Waverley. He knew the

change of scene and the pure air, so different from the heated atmosphere of the city, would invigorate her, and give to his "little girl," as he had used to call her, strength and health.

One evening, musing sadly on the mournful present and the cheerless future, he was surprised to feel the light touch of a woman's hand upon his arm, and to see the bright face of Constance peering over his shoulder, while she whispered, "Come with me, dear uncle." She led him to the door of Mona's morning room, and there she made him pause, while she went in alone. He could see the wasted form of his poor child, as she lay upon the couch. Her white dress was not whiter than her face, and her fair hair fell over the pillows by which she was supported, with all the luxuriance of other days. He saw Constance kneel by her side, and heard her say :

" Dearest Mona, much has been done to relieve your sorrow and pain. You are growing stronger now, but your sorrow is not gone. There is a hope; but the hope must be in His mercy, whose ways are not as man's. We can trust, but only in Him; we can pray, and He has promised to hear."

" I do pray. I am ever praying to be delivered from this sore evil," said Mona.

" But the cry for pardon must first come, and, with it, perfect charity—as we pardon others."

The thin hands of the invalid were clasped together, and she moved uneasily.

" 'Charity never faileth.' Charity, dear Mona, is like His love—the love which nothing can alter; and the love

which may, if so God will, restore your husband to you again. Between you and the compassionate Father there is a barrier raised. My darling, blessed are they who keep His law."

Constance beckoned to her uncle. He entered with a faltering step. She led him to the couch of Mona, repeating the new commandment, "Love one another." He took the child, so sorely afflicted, to his heart, and Constance saw the gray head bowed, and heard the words of love and repentance breathed softly, and then she left them.

An hour after, her aunt and uncle met her in the hall, and drew her toward them, embracing her, and weeping glad tears, while with one voice they cried, "Blessed is the peacemaker!"

CHAPTER XLI.

" Wayward was thy infancy ;
Thy school days frightful, desperate, wild, and furious ;
Thy prime of manhood, daring, bold, and venturous !
Thy age confirmed, proud, subtle, sly, and bloody."

SHAKSPERE.

THE father of Edward Hamilton had married, while very young, a woman older than himself, a widow with one son. Francis Burton was a wild lad, and his mother had no authority over him. His stepfather despised the deceitful, artful boy ; therefore between them soon grew a strong antipathy, which Mr. Hamilton endeavored to conceal from his wife. When Edward was nearly four years of age, and Francis twelve, the latter was sent to boarding school. From one and another he was expelled ; and at last, being brought under some discipline at one institution, the principal of which was very strict and severe, he ran away, and was not for a long time discovered. Mr. Hamilton then learned that the boy, in his wanderings and poverty, had committed disgraceful thefts, and had been in the worst companionship. Honorable himself, and proud to a high degree of purity of moral character and name, he prevailed upon the mother to

consent that Francis should be sent to sea, as he had desired, and declared he was no fit companion for *his* son.

Mrs. Hamilton, a beautiful, but weak and sorrowful woman, died after a year or two, leaving a letter for her little Edward, in which she enjoined upon him the kindest care and forbearance with his brother, should they ever meet; adding, that her curse should rest on him did he ever injure or distress her fatherless son.

Francis Burton led a disgraceful life, sometimes returning to the United States, but never happening to encounter his brother. Thus time passed; and when Mr. Hamilton married again, Burton returned once more to his own country, and, hovering around the city of M—, haunted the father by the fear lest his boy should see and know this wretch, his brother. It was now that Francis committed the forgery which, if once known, would have brought disgrace on all connected with him. Mr. Hamilton redeemed the note, concealed him from justice, and gave him means for his escape from America; but he sent him from him with such bitter words as were never forgotten; and that proud, stern, unyielding man gained a lasting enemy.

Years passed away. Edward, knowing imperfectly the story, grew to be a man. Tidings came to the father of his stepson's death. It would be vain to say that he did not rejoice. To him it was a release from the bondage of fear. *His* son, at least, bore a name on which no blot had ever fallen, and was all the parent's heart could desire.

But Francis yet lived. Some man, eccentric, yet kind, befriended in distant lands the miserable youth, who, even in

the want and sickness in which he found him, showed still the marvellous beauty of face and form which he ever possessed, and of which no excess or distress could rob him. This man, dying, left to Burton his small fortune, and his name. A partial reform seemed now to take place in Maxwell (for we henceforth must call Burton by the name of his benefactor), a reform in outward habits alone, while in his heart the evil grew and multiplied; and the hatred which he had ever felt for the husband of his mother, did not lie dormant, but cried aloud for vengeance. After some years had elapsed, and time and disguise had effected changes which gave him courage, he returned once more to this country, and mingled in the society in which Edward Hamilton lived; saw him often courted and flattered, fortune's favorite; and he nursed his envy till it knew no bounds. Thus the duel in which the two men engaged. Then came Maxwell's fiendish, triumphant acknowledgment of their relationship, and Edward's horror in the thought that he had killed his brother; for, infidel as he was in all else, Maxwell judged him truly, when he said he held a superstitious faith in cursing. This was the man who had married Mona Harcourt; this was the man Hamilton was seeking once again, and, seeking, found.

“You complain, my dear Miss Susan,” Edward wrote to her, “that I am wasting time and life. I answer, I have wasted both; but I am doing duty now. The time may come when you can have me with you once more. Till then, be patient, and believe that I have no sweeter memories than those with which your name is linked; no memories at once

so sacred, and so painless. When I think of *others*, dear, but gone from me, sorrow mingleth with my tenderness, and repentance with thanksgiving. But *you* have ever been my consoler. From the affection which exists between us, no sorrow has ever grown; and, amid all my wanderings, amid all my darkness and my doubt, I know that I was ever faithful to you. You write mournfully, and tell me you are growing old; that the evening of your life has come. To me, you never can be old. Your tenderness is ever growing, your sympathy and gentleness ever increasing. With age there is decay; with you, for me, there is a life of *new* goodness and *new* love alway. It is not the light of evening time, which you perceive; it is the light of a new day of joy commencing, not for you only, but, through His mercy, for me also. We are now in the gray dawn, and see only the fainter brightness of that rising Sun; but soon shall come the perfect joy of that Morning which shall have no end; and

'With the morn those angel faces smile,
Which we have loved long since, and lost awhile.'"

CHAPTER XLII.

"Well may they curse their second breath,
Who rise to everlasting death !
Thou great Creator of mankind,
Oh ! let this soul salvation find."

DAMON ISAAC MARSHALL

AGAIN Hamilton sought Maxwell, and again he found him, but overpowered by disease ; his strength and beauty gone, and he writhing in agony, an object to excite disgust and aversion, and deserted by every attendant, for all fled from the contagion of the malady which was destroying him. In his delirium, Maxwell conceived Edward to be his step-father, and shrieked wildly in terror that he came to upbraid him, and drag him down an abyss of darkness. Thus the distressed young man gathered from the ravings of the invalid that it was through him his father was deprived of life. For it was Francis Burton who accosted the elder Hamilton as he rode, belated, over a lonely road, and then revealed himself in his true character to the man who had believed him dead. It was his murderous attempts upon the life of the rider, which excited the already frightened horse to frenzy ; and, agitated and bewildered by the knowledge

gained, Mr. Hamilton lost entire control of his alarmed steed, was thrown, and killed almost immediately. Burton made haste to gain a place of security, and hence there was no suspicion of any other than the direct cause of the death of Edward's father. Now, to the pains of body which Maxwell endured, was added the torture of a conscience just awakened, and the remembrance of a life of crime, so dark, so fearful, that no ray of light could penetrate.

Edward Hamilton had loved his father with all the tenderness of which he was capable. He venerated his memory; he ever strove to imitate all that was noble and true in him. Therefore the shuddering horror with which he gathered knowledge of this new, and, to him, surpassing villainy of Maxwell, no words can depict. His first impulse was to rush from the house, and leave the sinner to his fate—alone, neglected, despairing, to die in agony. It seemed but just. It seemed a sin against the memory of his father, to forgive, to perform one kindly office for the wretch, his murderer. But Hamilton bore the name of Christ, and imitated his example. He stayed by the man; he incurred every risk; he ministered to his relief; he watched and prayed beside him to the last.

Maxwell, one day, being sensible, called Edward to his side, and told him all. Not penitently; not as though the hope of mercy made him speak; nor yet triumphing in his wretchedness; but as though his load of secret guilt must be shared with another. He told of the letter purporting to come from Constance, which she never wrote, but which he

forged when Margaret Courcy had dictated the words. Edward heard all, and bowed his head in silence.

"I know," cried Maxwell, turning his scarred and disfigured face toward Hamilton, "I know you have no forgiveness in your heart. I do not ask it. It would be vain. I know there is a God, to whose dread tribunal I go; and I know the doom which awaits me *there*. Man cannot forgive; then how can He, against whom my sins have been more fearful, and not less presumptuous! But my child, my innocent child, and miserable wife—let them never know me by another name than that they bear. Promise, in pity. Do not let your vengeance follow me to my grave, then fall on them!"

"I promise," said Hamilton.

"Swear it!" cried Maxwell, with his hand upraised.

Edward vowed that so it should be.

The dying wretch now writhed from side to side; he groaned in agony. As all the past recurred to his mind, his shrieks, his cries for mercy grew more frequent, and his sufferings more appalling. The horror he endured, no words can picture. It was midnight, when the change came over his face, and the moments of his earthly life were numbered. Conscious to the last, with his glazing eyes fixed on Edward, he heard from his lips the promises of Him who pardoned the thief upon the cross. He saw the kneeling figure of the man so deeply wronged beside him, and heard the prayers he could not offer for himself, repeated by another.

"Can you forgive?" gasped Maxwell.

"I do forgive, as I hope to be forgiven," was the an-

swer; "and He who is more merciful than man, not only forgives, but washes out the stain."

The feeble hands were joined, and the faint voice cried:

"Have mercy—and blot out—O Christ!"

"Amen!" said Edward. In another instant, the living stood beside the dead!

CHAPTER XLIII.

"Sweet are the uses of adversity."

SHAKSPHERE.

IN the drawing room of Waverley sat a woman in a widow's dress. She was alone, and seated by the window, yet not watching the autumn leaves as they fell, nor yet observant of the brilliant colors of the foliage—the rich nut-brown, the chrome yellow, the bright crimson, and the brighter scarlet. To the distant hills, enveloped in the "mists of time's remotest blue," Mona's gaze was directed. Calm and tranquil was the scene. Even the world about her was still; but those hills, covered with verdure, whose brilliancy was partly veiled, looked far, far away, and so peaceful, that they spoke of rest.

"Constance is right," thought Mona. "Spring, bringing life and vigor, makes us feel we must be up and doing; but autumn causes us to sigh for Paradise and rest."

"The gentleman is come, Mrs. Maxwell," said a servant, breaking in upon her reverie. "He is in the library."

She rose hastily, and, not without evidencing some agitation, crossed the hall. Before the door of the room

into which she must enter, she paused, but only for an instant; then the curious servant saw the door was opened with a trembling hand, and closed behind the lady. Once more Mona Maxwell and Mr. Hamilton were side by side.

She was so changed from the girl he had known, as almost to startle him. The golden curls were brushed smoothly under the close widow's cap; the fair cheeks were pale and thin. Yet the young face had not grown old, but had lost its sunny, cloudless, *piquante* look. Her very step was changed from its former buoyant tread, to one subdued and slow.

She took his hand in both hers, and her tears flowed fast as she poured forth words of gratitude. He allowed her to speak without interruption; he permitted her to weep for awhile; then, leading her to a seat, he sat beside her, and talked to her gently of what had been, and of the future. Their interview was short. He had already written to her all which might be told, but she would hear it once again from his lips.

“I found him ill—with—a fever. I remained with him. He was too ill to be removed, and you could not come to him—” Edward paused, as he noted the quivering lips and clasped hands of the listener.

“Oh! for one last word—one last look!” she cried, passionately. “I should ask no more!”

“His last word was a prayer, his last look was turned heavenward,” answered Hamilton. “Let this be your sweetest and most grateful memory.”

“The first prayer my child shall utter,” said Mona,

deeply moved, "shall be a call for God's blessing on your name. And do you think it will not come! Oh! can there be a blessing, and it not descend for *you*! Is there a good, which shall not be *yours*!"

He left her, and even that saddened, weary heart found voice to utter praise; and Mona, in her hour of darkness, saw a Light.

CHAPTER XLIV.

“Oh! fie upon this single life! Forego it.”

“HAYLANDS again!” cried Hamilton, as he drove through the gates. “Ah, Miss Susan, there is no place so like home to me!”

“Not even Chilton, your father’s house?”

“Not even Chilton. It is five years since I have lived in the old place, and there are no familiar places there. But here I have some one dear to welcome me, and no sad reminiscences, or temptation to idle dreaming. Nature smiles here more brightly. The very birds of Chilton have a sorrowful note. But the birds of Haylands chirp blithely, and——” He broke off suddenly. “What are you thinking now, *ma tante?*”

“Whether you are truly happy, Edward.”

“I thought you were to have no more anxious fears for me. I am more truly happy than I ever was before.”

“Dear Thiodolf! And will you settle down near to us—to me, and wander no more?”

“*Nous verrons.* Would you like to go back to M—— again, and be my good angel once more?”

"I do not know about being a good angel; but I would return to M—— willingly, if it would make you happy, and give you the assurance of a home."

He was silent for a moment—then said:

"I ought to get to work again. I must not lead a useless life. But I dread a residence in M——."

"Try Chilton."

He shook his head.

"You must get your Isolde, Thiodolf, before you get your home!"

"Matchmaking again, Miss Susan! When will you correct that fault?" She laughed. "Besides," he continued, "my Isolde will not come when she is called."

"Then you must go in search of her!"

"And, after all, not find her—a sort of wild-goose chase! Not I!"

"Do you suppose you can get a wife without asking for her?"

"No; certainly not."

"Do you mean to do without one?"

"Most assuredly, madam."

Miss Mortimer could not but laugh, and then began to scold; when they arrived at the door of the house, and the end of her scolding. Hamilton assisted her from the carriage, while Mrs. Fairfax and Carrie welcomed them from the porch.

"Was your drive pleasant, Susan?" asked her sister.

"Very pleasant. The air was delightful, and the country looking very beautiful."

"Why do you not give the true reason for your satisfaction, even your agreeable companion?" said Hamilton.

"Oh, the vanity of mankind!" cried Miss Susan, yet she looked as though his jesting words were true.

"One would think you blood relations," remarked Carrie, a little sulkily; "Aunt Susan, you are so fond of him!"

"Who in the world taught you about 'blood relations,' Miss Carrie? Is that a lesson you have learned since putting on long dresses? or do you grow ashamed of the relationship of Cousin Edward? Really, Mrs. Fairfax, this is too bad!"

"Do not tease the child, Edward," said Miss Susan, kindly; "she meant nothing."

But Mrs. Fairfax was vexed, and showed her vexation; and Carrie was mortified, and pouting. She was jealous of her aunt's drive.

"Carrie went shopping, yesterday, to the city, with mamma," said little Pierre, "and ever since then she has been in a bad humor."

"Then she must repeat the experiment, to get in good humor," said Hamilton, "after the example of the man, who, having scratched his eyes out by jumping into a bramble bush, jumped in again to regain them. I will take her tomorrow."

Carrie smiled. "I would be afraid to shop with you, cousin; you like such gay colors."

"That is a libel. I am a sober, staid man, Miss Fairfax, with a predilection for Quaker colors."

Carrie laughed now outright. She had fastened her col-

lar with a knot of scarlet ribbon that very day, to please him ; and Hamilton continued :

“ You, Carrie, are precisely like the woman who told the shopman she liked ‘ nothing flashy or gaudy ; ’ she *only* ‘ wanted a bright yellow with spots but seldom ! ’ What do you say to that, master Peter ? ”

“ My name is not Peter,” said the youngest scion of the house of Fairfax.

“ You said you hated France and foreigners. What right have you to a French name ? I shall call you nothing but Peter ! ”

“ Then I’ll never answer you—never ! ”

“ How can you expect the children to be respectful, when you spoil them so terribly ! Indeed, Edward, I cannot allow it,” said the exemplary mamma ; “ they are very impertinent toward you. Pierre, you must learn to speak properly——”

But Pierre, at the commencement of a lecture, fled, and Hamilton went in full pursuit. Neither were seen again for an hour, when they returned together the best of friends.

“ I declare, mamma,” said Pierre, in a half whisper, “ I never saw any one like Cousin Edward. I wish I could go to school to him. I learned more in an hour, with him, than I do in a week at school. For all he is such a jolly good fellow, I cannot help being respectful. So you need not scold, mamma.”

Mr. Fairfax, overhearing, laughed. “ You are illustrating your assertion, my boy ! Pierre says that you command his respect, Hamilton ; and adds, that you are a ‘ jolly good fellow ! ’ ”

"I am happy to gain his favorable opinion, sir."

"Where are you going now?—to make ready for a flight?"

"Yes, sir. Miss Dorrington summons me to New York."

"Susan, you will have to look after this man," said Mr. Fairfax, "or that Miss Hattie will capture him."

The prospective captive smiled. "Miss Susan will give her consent, for Miss Hattie is a great deal too good for me."

"I wonder what Miss Alice Courcy would say to that," cried Carrie. "She said, yesterday, she was sure Mr. Hamilton would throw himself away."

"Do not quote Miss Alice in my presence, Carrie," said Hamilton; "it is too severe a test of my charity."

"Miss Susan tells me you are purposing to sell Chilton," remarked Mr. Fairfax. "What put that idea into your head?"

"I cannot occupy it, sir. It is impossible to have it kept in proper order, unless the owner overlooks it. I do not wish the place to go to ruin, so I think of parting with it."

"Pshaw! Who will give half its value? Have done wandering over the world; get a sensible wife, and settle down to your domestic joys, and your professional duties, like an honest man."

Miss Mortimer looked well pleased, and Hamilton replied, goodnaturedly:

"Thank you for your advice, Mr. Fairfax; I will consider it! And in the mean time——"

"Look out for a sensible wife," interrupted Lionel, rather cynically ; "a needle in a haystack!"

"He will do no such thing," cried Mr. Fairfax, half provoked. "He will sell Chilton, and see with his own eyes the place destroyed by some vandal of a purchaser. Serve him right!"

Mr. Hamilton laughed, and his rejoinder was so witty that it dissipated all traces of vexation. There was a smile on every face when he had left the room, and Mr. Fairfax remarked, seriously :

"I wish from my heart the poor fellow would settle down to something. He is wasting life now."

Miss Susan was anxious to defend her favorite, therefore a discussion ensued, which was prolonged till dinner was announced. It is needless to add, that Miss Mortimer's arguments were not conclusive, and she was totally defeated ; for, besides being a man and a lawyer, Mr. Fairfax was upon the right side. Hamilton was wasting time and life, and she knew it.

CHAPTER XLV.

"Sir, you are very welcome to our house."

SHAKESPEARE.

EDWARD and Miss Mortimer returned to M——, and were established in their former residence. It looked no longer desolate, for it was enlivened by the presence of Carrie and Pierre Fairfax, who were to spend the winter with them. Hamilton had returned to his profession. He was as earnest now as he had once been negligent. His profession was his mistress, and, as though to reward him for his devotion, he was fast becoming successful. His name and position were in his favor, and, for his father's sake, he received much encouragement. The few obstacles which he encountered, and the remembrance of the wasted time which could never be redeemed, incited him to greater exertion. Miss Susan sometimes scolded because he was so immersed in business, that he neglected society ; but he would smile, and answer, that her society, and that of the children, as he called Carrie and Pierre (though Carrie resented the title), was all he desired. To the Langdons he never went, though, when he met any member of the family, his manner

convinced them that he was not forgetful of their kindness to him in the days past. They met rarely. When Mrs. Langdon or her daughter called upon Miss Susan, he was almost invariably absent or nonapparent; thus Miss Mortimer's secret wish seemed as far from realization as ever.

One evening, when winter had fairly set in, Carrie, who possessed great confidence in her own persuasive powers, asked him to take her to Mrs. Langdon's to spend the evening. "Miss Constance," she said, "had asked her to come, and she had promised to do so for two weeks. Really, he *must* take her, if he would be so kind."

He was "very sorry to disappoint her, but he had an engagement. She had better wait, and go with her aunt in the morning."

"Oh, Cousin Edward! But a morning call is so stupid, and she really wanted to see me. You said, at dinner, that you meant to remain at home this evening. Miss Constance will be just as glad to see you, as me! Why are you so shy of the young ladies? It is too bad for any one like you to be a bachelor."

"I'll take you to the house, Carrie," was the laughing answer, "and leave you, calling for you at ten o'clock. No wonder I am 'shy' of women, when they always contrive to have their own way with me!"

The Langdon family were cheerfully discussing the events of the day, and Albert was relating some amusing anecdotes of his scholars and their scholarship, when Carrie Fairfax entered their parlor. She was welcomed by the



ladies, and the two gentlemen introduced, before Constance asked who had brought her—if “it were a servant?”

“No, indeed. My cousin considers me too precious to trust me with any one but himself. He escorted me.”

“And would not come in with you!” cried Constance, indignantly. “What ill manners! Did he lose his politeness while abroad?”

Carrie laughed. “He declined to bring me at first, for he had some engagement, he said, which would prevent; but I coaxed for his escort, and he is to call at ten o’clock for me.”

“How do you like M——?” asked Mr. Langdon.

“Very much, sir. My aunt and cousin do all in their power to make my stay pleasant; and Pierre and I generally go sightseeing every day. We see comparatively little of our cousin Edward. This is the only drawback to our perfect enjoyment.”

“I have heard that he has not much to do with general society,” said Mr. Langdon, smiling; “but I did not know that he was anything of a recluse in his own family.”

“Oh! I did not mean that, sir. His study is never a sort of den, or growlery, from which we are excluded; but his occupations are so many. I never saw any one so devoted to his profession. He is over head and ears in business. Papa is nothing to him. However, when he does come from his office, Mr. Hamilton condescends to be very agreeable, and one would think he cared for nothing and no one but us!”

To one person present, this girlish praise of her cousin

was very acceptable ; and Carrie rattled on with the characteristic volubility of a talkative, clever, but rather conceited miss of fifteen. She had the amiability of Miss Mortimer, and some of her mother's spiciness ; and her witty speeches and great vivacity amused Mr. and Mrs. Langdon, while Albert enjoyed with her a lively, bantering conversation. She was sufficiently young to laugh, and had not yet learned that well-bred young women only *smile* ! There was a call for some music at last. Immediately, and without affectation, Carrie complied with the request, and played and sang some simple airs.

"That is all I can do, and the best, Miss Langdon," she said, gayly. "I will never be a musician, although I have been taking lessons years and years."

Every one said she sang very sweetly, and every one spoke truly. Mrs. Langdon, besides commanding her, encouraged her to practise.

"That is just like Aunt Susan," cried Carrie. "But my cousin scolds me terribly because I do not follow her advice."

"So he ought," remarked Constance. "You are very naughty, Carrie. I have half a mind to read you a lecture myself."

Carrie held up her hands in pretended deprecation, promising amendment.

While Constance was singing, Mr. Hamilton rang the bell. "A gentleman for Miss Fairfax," announced Kitty, the maid. Albert went into the passage to induce him to come in, but he tried to excuse himself. Constance finished her song, and put her head just outside the parlor door.



"Good evening, sir." Mr. Hamilton doffed his hat. "You cannot have Carrie, unless you come in. You have become very unsociable! Come in, and make apologies, not to Miss Langdon, for they would be useless, but to Mr. and Mrs. Langdon, who are disposed to be more lenient."

He entered, stayed ten minutes, and exerted himself to give pleasure to all.

When their visitors had departed, Mr. Langdon exclaimed :

"I have never met a man who could excel Edward Hamilton in conversational talent!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

"Hope in the heart, like the rainbow so cheering,
Is born, like the rainbow, in tears."

THE sky was dark and lowering; the East wind was chill and raw, and Constance hurried through the streets of M—— toward her home, walking very fast, for the rain was now commencing to descend in torrents. She was unconscious of everything but the havoc or impression the watery element was making upon her dress, and was repenting heartily the imprudence which had tempted her to venture from the shelter of her house without an umbrella, when that last-named article was held over her head, and some one said :

"You will have to call me your rainbow!"

"Oh! Mr. Hamilton, I am very grateful. Of course you are my rainbow, and a very brilliant one, too!"

"My brilliancy should be greater than your prudence, Miss Constance. How did you dare to trust yourself out of doors to-day?"

"I hope you do not think I came out without an umbrella, yet in expectation of the rain! That would be too



severe a reflection on my prudence. I am so glad that I did not don my best bonnet, when I consider the state of this one!"

She was so lively and bright, that he appreciated entirely the spirit which laughed in her eyes, as she turned her head toward him; and he saw the dilapidated condition of her dark bonnet, and the disordered hair which she despaired of smoothing with her hands, all wet, and hanging about her face.

The rain was now falling so heavily, and the wind so strong, that Hamilton hailed a hack passing, and assisted Constance into it. She was a good deal disturbed, and said that this was too much, and the umbrella was sufficient.

"Not for me," he replied, shrugging his shoulders. "I have a great dislike to colds and catarrhs."

She could not but smile, and then asked some question concerning Miss Susan, remarking that she had not seen her for a long time.

"Miss Susan visits but little at best, and, now that Carrie is with her, she goes out less than ever. Do you not think, Miss Constance, that Carrie has improved?"

"Yes," was the hearty answer. "She will be a fine woman some day; and as she grows older, I observe a something in her face which likens her to"—"our little Bessie," she had nearly said, but checked herself—"which likens her to your little Bessie."

Hamilton made no answer. She could see that even now the mention of his sister's name brought pain. Men are so different from women, they find it harder to extract honey

from the bitter past, or to speak with a hope which makes remembrance almost joyful, of the beloved dead.

The conversation turned on other matters. They were passing Mrs. Jordan's house, and Hamilton recalled, with all its force, the hour when, almost three years before, Constance had sent him from her, with the passionate words which blotted out his brightest earthly hope. His companion was unmindful of any association with the place which they were passing, and continued to talk cheerfully or wisely, with the unconsciousness of self which was her remarkable characteristic. The hour had long gone by since the utterance of his name brought blushes to her cheek, or the sound of his voice, or intercourse with him, could disturb her composure. Former thoughts and feelings she had endeavored to put aside. They could be friends only. Friends only she thought must they remain. At length she asked a question, and received no immediate answer.

"I beg your pardon," he said, apologetically, when the inquiry was repeated; "my thoughts were far away—not from this place, but in the unforgotten past."

The rain had ceased, but the sky looked yet dark and lowering.

"You are a little sad," she said, timidly. "I think I could almost read your thoughts;" and she glanced involuntarily on the deep mourning dress he yet wore. He regarded her steadily, and she continued: "They are thoughts which are not good for you——"

"You are right," he said, interrupting her abruptly;

"they are unavailing ; they bring neither patience nor hope."

"It is not the memory which is wrong," she pursued ; "it is the vain regret, the inordinate sorrow ; not the memory of the past, which is in itself a pleasure, mournful though it be, for it brings merciful warnings, and the recollections of that *loving* correction which makes us great ! "

"It brings for me only warning," rejoined Hamilton. "I know that I am wrong, but I cannot see the mercy, nor love the correction."

He was moved to see how sorrowful that sweet face by his side grew, as he spoke.

"Ah," she said sadly, almost deprecatingly, "I did not think to hear you speak such words—you, who have breathed hope to others ; you, who, once in darkness, yet now have learned to lead others to the Light ! I pray you, put away these sad repinings. Consider the unspeakable joy into which your darling has entered, and do you evermore rejoice. It is that which she would bid you do. Think, it is Bessie who speaks. Yes, we both cry, No longer mourn ! Rejoice, rejoice, oh brother ! "

He turned away his face, as he said :— "Thank you ; you are always my better angel." His manner was gentle, but she saw that he was pained. It was the word "brother."

"Oh, forgive me !" cried Constance, quickly, her eyes filling with tears ; "I did not mean to hurt you. I did not consider what memories of the dear child's loss that name must bring."

"It is not that," returned Hamilton, with all the passion-

ate earnestness of other days ; " not that alone. From your lips I can bear allusions to my life's great sorrow, to my last bereavement, which, from those of others, I could not endure. But now, even now, although years have passed since first I realized that you were gone from me forever, I cannot hear repeated, with the composure of a stoic, that the barrier between us is impassable. I cannot hear *you* call me by that name, which is sacred to one alone. Your faith has never wavered ; your mind has never been darkened with a doubt ; you will deem me forgetful of the Higher Love, because I grieve that the earthly affection has fled. It is not so. Wavering, imperfect, all unworthy as I am, I do look upward ; and although I cling to earthly memories, I cling with assurance of a greater comfort and rest to the Strong Arm, which led me forth from darkness. But do you think that the past can be as nothing to me ? My heart has never faltered in its true allegiance. Through all the long years of sorrow and of absence, in every land, my thoughts turned to you ; to you, whom I remembered as on the day when you saved me, the heavenly radiance enveloping your face and form in light—light dwelling with you, light guiding you. Oh, Constance, Constance ! " he added, more gently, the exquisite pathos of his rich voice thrilling through her heart, " you bid me rejoice. I do rejoice—rejoice in much, without which I should be miserable indeed ; but not that you are lost to me ! "

Constance once again raised her veil, and turned her face, half smiling and half grave, toward Hamilton.

" And have these long years been as nothing to me ?

Whose thoughts have followed you in all your wanderings? who has feared for you? who has mourned with you? and whose prayers for you have been unceasing? Ah, your face answers me! Oh, Edward! with all your learning, with all your knowledge, you could not read, till now, a woman's heart!"

"And so," said Mr. Langdon, sorrowfully, that evening, as he drew Constance closer to his side, and fondly touched the smooth, dark hair, and patted the glowing cheek, "and so, my dear, we are to lose our dear daughter, the sunbeam of our household!"

Mrs. Langdon did not reply, but bent lower over her work, upon which some bright drops were falling. Then answered Hamilton:

"I do not take your daughter from you. I ask you to adopt another son."

CHAPTER XLVII.

"For many friends go in and out, and praise thee, finding pasture,
And some are honeycomb to-day, who turn to gall to-morrow."

PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY.

"MISS CONSTANCE is engaged, sir. Walk into the parlor, if you please," answered Kitty, when Mr. Hamilton, no longer "a recluse," has made his daily morning inquiry.

"Show him into the dining room," cries her young lady from that apartment.

The gentleman does not wait to be directed, but makes his way thither, while Kitty very discreetly and properly goes about her duties.

Constance was there in her unostentatious home, still engaged in the same routine of household duties which had heretofore devolved upon her. Hamilton's wealth did not occupy her thoughts. It was enough that he loved her—that they were to be united for life—their hearts bound together, their aims and hopes the same.

She greeted him with a smile that imparted a charm to the homely office she was performing; while the deep glow on her cheeks, the excellent beauty of her person, the simple

dignity of her manner, made the reception very attractive and interesting to such a lover as Hamilton.

"How charming you look, dear Constance, in that white apron! Do you wear such an one every morning?"

"Had you been more conversant with the occupations of housewifery, you would have known, Edward, that this is a part of a working woman's costume!"

"If it becomes all as it does you, Constance, I shall hereafter eulogize the housewife."

"Come, do not flatter me. But you are early, this morning—fifteen minutes before your appointment."

"I suppose," he answered, "I have an excuse for impatience now."

Constance blushed—called in Kitty to put away the breakfast things, showed Hamilton into the parlor, and ran away to prepare herself for their intended walk.

Mr. Fairfax, who had come on for the wedding, encountered the pedestrians as they were entering a picture gallery, and accompanied them. His great cordiality delighted Constance, but his stage whisper to Hamilton, as they parted, and the latter's reply, disturbed a little her equanimity, and caused her to take a marvellous interest in a very inferior painting near at hand.

"So you did not sell Chilton, my good fellow! What a pity!"

"I had no opportunity in the fall, sir; and, now that I intend following your advice, 'taking a sensible woman for my wife, and settling down to be an honest man,' I shall probably find use for the place myself."

While Constance bade Mr. Fairfax "good morning," some tall lady accosted Mr. Hamilton. Constance could not see her face, but the figure seemed familiar; and, not liking to interrupt the conversation, when Mr. Fairfax was gone, she moved aside to pursue her examination of the pictures. Yet she looked from time to time, with some curiosity and a little impatience, toward the green silk dress, and black velvet mantle with ermine trimmings, which enveloped the unknown; thus she caught a glimpse of some bright red locks, and soon the face of Alice Courcy was turned toward her. Miss Alice was conveniently near-sighted; first stared, and then raised her eyeglass to take an inventory of Miss Langdon's dress, before she bestowed a patronizing nod of recognition. Constance returned it courteously, then examined her catalogue with marked interest. Mr. Hamilton, observant of the scene, appeared amused.

"What a haughty, supercilious creature!" remarked Alice. "I dislike pretentious people; and Constance Langdon always was vain. Just observe how she stands. She takes Spanish attitudes, and thinks her beauty irresistible!"

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Hamilton, his eyes darkening; "I do not understand your meaning."

Miss Alice was indifferent. She tossed the white bonnet, as though to toss away the subject, and informed him that Margaret was in the next room, and he must do the honors of the gallery for them both.

"Excuse me, Miss Courcy; I am attending one lady already, and must submit to her orders."

"How provoking! Who is she? Point her out."

"Miss Langdon!"

This time Miss Alice stared at the gentleman. "Pshaw!" she said; "she will not care. She has been here, without doubt, a hundred times. There is my sister. Margaret, come here!"

Margaret, seeing Constance and Hamilton, although not side by side, suspected the truth, and she experienced an unpleasant consciousness of a certain letter with which she had had to do. She was by no means self-possessed as she greeted her "friend." Alice immediately informed her that Mr. Hamilton could not attend them on their perambulations, "for, unfortunately, he was tied fast to that flirting Constance Langdon. She really hoped he would not be caught in her flimsy net. She was a real fortune hunter; she had encouraged Dr. Caxton for years, then threw him over because he was poor; after enslaving that stupid Wellesley Glenn for the sake of his four hundred thousand dollars, she gave him the mitten as soon as she heard of the arrival of the steamer which brought Mr. Hamilton to the United States!"

Margaret's nervousness was not lessened by observing the expression of the listener's face. Constance had crossed the gallery, and overheard the last sentence.

"I am honored by the right to defend Miss Langdon," said Hamilton, "and pronounce such reports of her character as malicious and false——"

"Good morning ladies," said the gentle voice of Constance by his side, interrupting the scene likely to ensue. "Can you, or can Mr. Hamilton tell me the subject of this painting—No. 41? My catalogue is deficient."

The Misses Courcy were silent. Mr. Hamilton handed his catalogue to the questioner, bowed distantly to the two sisters, and admired No. 41 with Miss Langdon. The circuit of the gallery being made, he offered her his arm, as he escorted her down the stairs.

"It will be all over the town by evening," she said, laughingly, as she turned her flushed face toward him. "We must be prepared for congratulations to-morrow. Edward," she added, more gravely, "how could you allow those foolish words to cause you one moment's uneasiness?"

"Must the woman who has promised to be my wife be calumniated in my hearing, and I listen with calmness! Shame upon the man who could, or would. Constance, I am not patient."

She assented to this last proposition with a smile.

"I can stand anything in a woman," he said, after a moment's silence, "but lying. That is unpardonable, unbearable!"

"What do you mean?" cried Constance, a little shocked.

"Only that Miss Margaret Courcy is more remarkable for her cleverness than her veracity. When I contrast you with that woman, I could quite detest her!"

"Do not contrast us then," said the gentle peacemaker.

"Neither will I. It is a sin against your purity, to name her name with yours."

She shook her head, as though in deprecation of his vehemence, and knew enough of man's nature to feel that to reason with him in such a mood would be useless; therefore she merely said:

"Forget foolish women, and speak of something more pleasant."

And Hamilton was too honorable to tell her all that Margaret had done.

That evening he received a letter from Miss Courcy, in which she apologized for the nonsense of Alice—she was always so foolish, it was not worth while to regard anything she said; and wrote in terms of praise of "his *generosity* in continuing faithful to his first love," and wished him happiness as though such happiness were doubtful. He replied by enclosing in an envelope the note which she had once designed him to believe came from Constance, and sending it to her address. It is needless to add, that their correspondence was effectually ended for all time.

A year later, Mr. Courcy died, and left his daughters almost penniless. Then it was that Mr. Hamilton befriended them, and Margaret learned a lesson which she never forgot.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"Now, after many wanderings strange and sad,
True love hath met, and sorrow hath found rest."

Fouqué's THIODOLE.

THE wedding day had arrived, and the very brightest of spring's mornings it proved. The showers of the night before made all the earth look more glad, as the storms through which the bridal pair had passed made them rejoice the more in the sunshine of the Present.

St. Thomas's church was yet fragrant with the Easter flowers, for the Easter feast had just passed. The beautiful chancel window, inserted so lately by Hamilton as a thank-offering, admitted the softened rays of the early morning sun. A crimson cross in one of the smaller lights was reflected on the white vestments of the priest, and on the snowy coverings of the holy table. Under the shadow of that cross, and bathed in its light, Constance and Edward stood.

There were not many present—those only who could and did offer prayers for them in that solemn hour. Their attendants, Mary Stanley and Lionel Fairfax; Mr. and Mrs. Langdon; Miss Susan and Albert; Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt,



but not *Mona* ; all the Fairfaxes, and some other very near and dear friends.

It was over. Their vows were plighted ; they were one. Then they knelt together—there they communed, there they dedicated themselves anew. “And there,” said Mr. Langdon, “they had His blessing who had guided them thus far, and who would defend and strengthen them amid the trials of the future, and would draw them ever closer to each other and to Him.”

There were no clouds in the sky ; there were no clouds in the faces of the bridal company ; the cheerfulness and innocent gayety of all were charming.

“Why, even you do not look sad,” said Mrs. Fairfax, addressing the parents, with pleasant surprise.

“Why should we ?” they answered. “Our child has ever brought us joy. Our joys and sorrows have been hers, and now her happiness is ours.”

But ere long Constance had need to prepare for her journey. Mrs. Langdon assisted her. The mother and daughter clung together then. “This is not right, dear mamma. Oh ! do not feel that this is parting. The few weeks will pass quickly, and then I shall be in M—— once more.”

At last the flowing veil was laid aside ; the simple white dress changed, her travelling habit donned ; the carriage waited ; the “good-bys” must be said. Friends bade them “good speed ;” kind wishes were made ; and then came the farewells to parents, the long embraces, the fervent blessings, and Constance realized that moment, as she had never done

before, the power and greatness of that tried and faithful love, the love of father and of mother.

"At last mine, all mine own!" exclaimed Hamilton, as they drove away. "My wife, my all! Why are you thoughtful, dearest, while I am only glad?"

"I fear," she replied, raising her dark, lustrous eyes to his, "lest, amid my greatest joy, I should forget Him who gave it. Oh! my dear Edward, let us lift up our hearts!"

And Hamilton bowed his head, repeating reverently, "We lift them up unto Thee."

CHAPTER XLIX.

CONCLUSION.

"The heart of the truly wise is like glass : it admits the light of Heaven, and reflects it."—GUESSES AT TRUTH.

MORE than two years had passed. Chilton was in full beauty, for the richest flowers of June decorated the parterres, or twined about the trelliswork of piazzas, or columns of porticos, or covered arbors. The air was heavy with the fragrance of the locust blossoms ; the lawn, so closely shaven, looked like soft velvet. The drives about the grounds were shaded by the luxuriant foliage of lofty trees. A lake, which took strange shapes and curves, was dazzlingly bright, and reflected the azure skies above, as the heart of the good reflects Heaven's own light. A pretty boat with gay awnings was fastened by its moorings to a miniature dock built close upon the water ; but there were no boatmen to unfasten the little barque, and row about the quiet stream. There were no figures to be seen moving here or there through the trees ; there were no sounds to be heard but those of the leaves, as they made faint, rustling responses to the whisper-

ing wind. Yet, had one approached nearer to the house, he might have observed a military gentleman standing on the steps of the south porch, and waiting for admission. It was granted by our old friend Spencer, now reinstated in his privilege of major-domo of the establishment.

The greeting which Hamilton gave to the newcomer was so cordial, that Spencer was assured he must be a great friend. Not long was their conference, for soon the host said :

“Come, Tracy, I must not be selfish. I must present you to Mrs. Hamilton.”

As they were passing from the library through the hall, they encountered a little girl, a tiny creature with golden hair, who came running toward them, crying, “Mamma says——” But what “mamma” had said was never discovered, for the little maid ceased her story, and drew off to some distance from the stranger, regarding him shyly.

“Come here,” said Hamilton, “and speak to Captain Tracy.”

She came forward, nothing loth, holding her dress with one hand as she made a childish courtesy—a very coquette in airs at three years old.

“What is your name?” inquired the amused Captain.

“Mona Harcourt Maxwell,” was the reply.

“What!” he cried, starting. “Not *his* child—not Maxwell’s—not Burton’s!”

“Hush!” said Hamilton, quickly. “They know nothing; they know him by no other name.”



"And you can forgive him, and tolerate his child in your house!" continued the other, but more softly.

"My enmity was dead before he died," answered Hamilton. "He who has need to be forgiven, must put on charity."

They entered the drawing room. A nurse stood near the door, watching an infant playing upon the floor. A lady's workbasket was upon a table, and some work hastily thrown down.

"This is mine," said Hamilton, stooping to raise the babe; "my Bessie—Bessie Beatrice—Bessie thrice blessed!" He was caressing the child, who patted his face with her tiny hands, and tried to say "papa."

"Upon my soul," exclaimed Captain Tracy, "I never thought myself a fool before!"

Hamilton laughed, as he put down his child, and turned round. The soldier's eyes were filled with tears. "Upon my soul," he repeated, seizing his friend by both hands, and shaking them as though they had but just met, "you are the noblest, best, finest man the world ever saw!"

"Hold your tongue," said Hamilton, "for here is my wife."

Any friend of her husband was always welcome, and Mrs. Hamilton's greeting was graceful and courteous. After a few moments the enthusiastic Captain was ready to say that she was the loveliest and best of women.

At a later hour, when the small family had assembled together in the pleasant drawing room, the stranger felt himself quite one with the household, in the genial atmosphere

of that happy home. There sat Constance, the true type of woman ; a loving, dutiful wife, a Christian mother ; faithful, tender, true ; lowly in her thoughts of herself, yet elevated in her hopes and desires ; her feet treading carefully and steadily the paths of earth ; one hand busied in the duties of home, the other pointing toward the goal to which her eyes were ever turned—the heavenly home.

There sat Miss Susan, unselfish, though single ; a pattern of neatness, yet not fretful ; quiet, yet not severe ; ever cheerful, ever patient, ever loving. Her heart had not admitted into its depths the one passion which we call “the grand,” but her heart enfolded all her children, as she termed Edward and Constance, their child, and their friends. Though her life was freer from those deepest feelings of bliss which God has given to many, yet was it as free from the bitterer trials those feelings need to chasten and exalt them. No schoolboys ever called her “sour old maid ;” no little people ever said, “Miss Mortimer is cross.” Young and old alike respected her, alike loved her ; not as a woman of brilliant genius, not as a woman singularly wise or learned, but as a woman wise in feminine arts, in feminine perception of the fitness of times and seasons ; a woman ready to rejoice with those who do rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Mona, too, was there, and all regretted that her brief visit to Chilton was almost ended, and she should on the morrow return with her little child to Waverley. The chastened beauty of her sweet face made known that she was one who, having been borne down by sorrow, had learned to rise superior to grief, clinging to the Great Consoler.

The friends had been recalling all the pleasing past, talking of old acquaintance, marriages, and other changes, when Constance gave a sigh of relief, and abruptly said :

“Then it is true, men never do die of love.”

Everybody laughed, and Mona said, with some of her olden gayety :

“That speech is *apropos* of Dr. Caxton’s wedding cards in perspective. Mary Stanley and he are to be married in a fortnight !”

“That reminds me to ask what has become of Lionel Fairfax,” said Captain Tracy. “Is he married ?”

“Oh, dear, no !” said Miss Susan. “He is growing to be a veritable old bachelor.”

“And the little Carrie,” continued the Captain, “she is, I suppose, a young woman now.”

“Yes,” replied Hamilton, smiling. “I believe, as we are all friends, I may tell you that she is to marry Albert Langdon, Mrs. Hamilton’s brother, as soon as that young gentleman is ordained.”

“I congratulate Mrs. Hamilton that she will obtain a sister so charming and worthy,” said the gallant officer.

“Papa and mamma are very happy in the thought,” said Constance, as she acknowledged the compliment, pleased for her husband’s sake, “for Carrie will quite take my place in their small household.”

When the stars were coming out one by one, all the party, excepting Mona, strolled out upon the lawn. The

Captain stood a little apart from the rest, and, as the others looked upon the beautiful scene, Miss Mortimer said :

“ Do you not love Chilton, Constance ? ”

“ Yes, dear aunt,” she answered, as she leaned fondly on her husband’s arm, “ for here is our dearest home. M—— is pleasant, but there is no place like this ; and it is Bessie’s birthplace. She came with the roses, just one year ago.”

“ And you, Edward, what do you think ? ” said the smiling aunt, turning her happy face toward her favorite. “ You said, once, that the very birds of Chilton sing a sorrowful song.”

“ Ah, Aunt Susan,” he replied, “ the Light, which dispelled the cloud from my mind, has opened to me new enjoyments. It dissipates the gloom of every association, and brightens every joy. All music is the sweeter for its influence ; even the birds seem to have imitated the cheerful harmony of Constance, and learned her song ! ”

“ And what is that, Edward ? ”

“ Rejoice evermore ! ”

T H E E N D.





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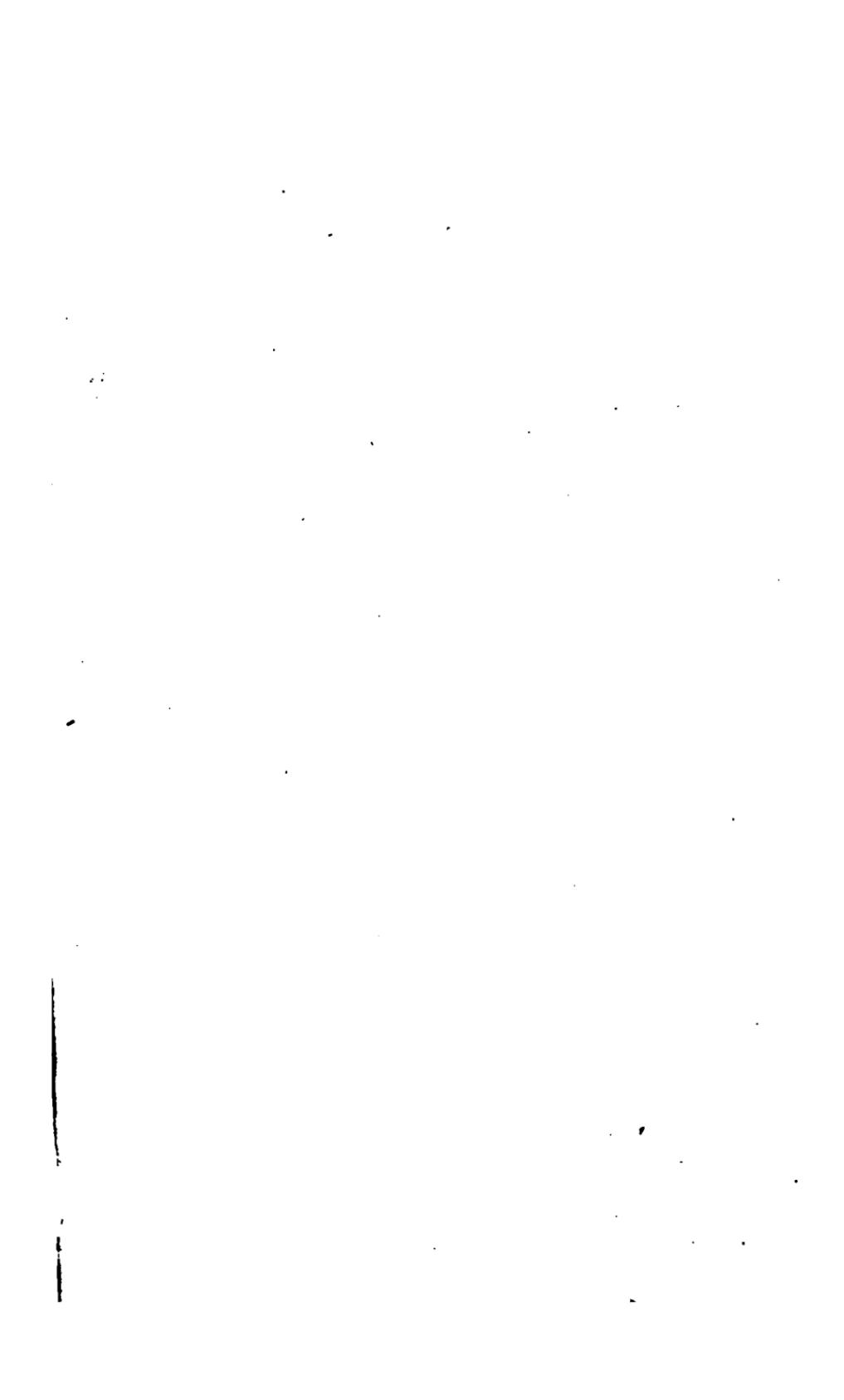
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